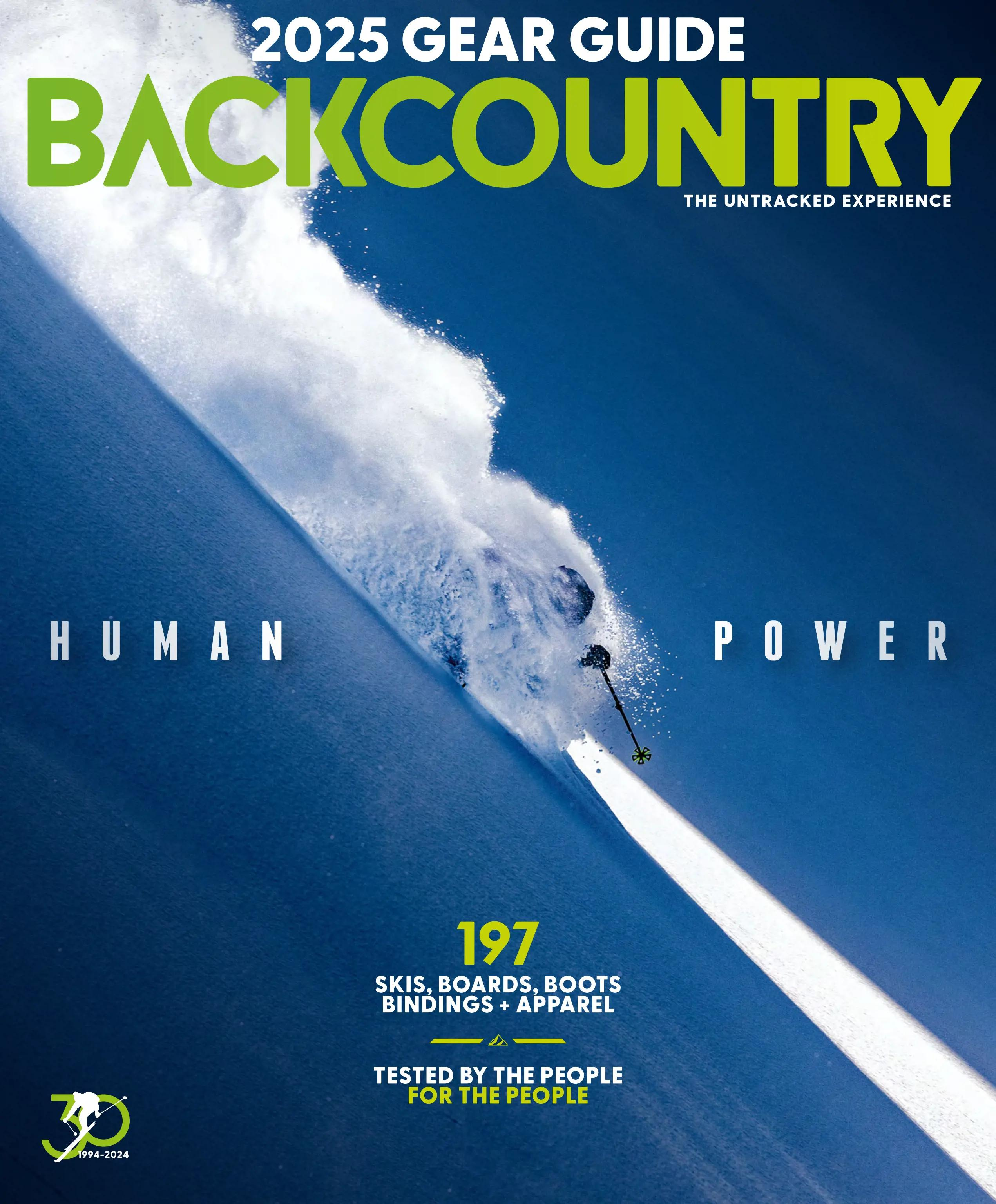

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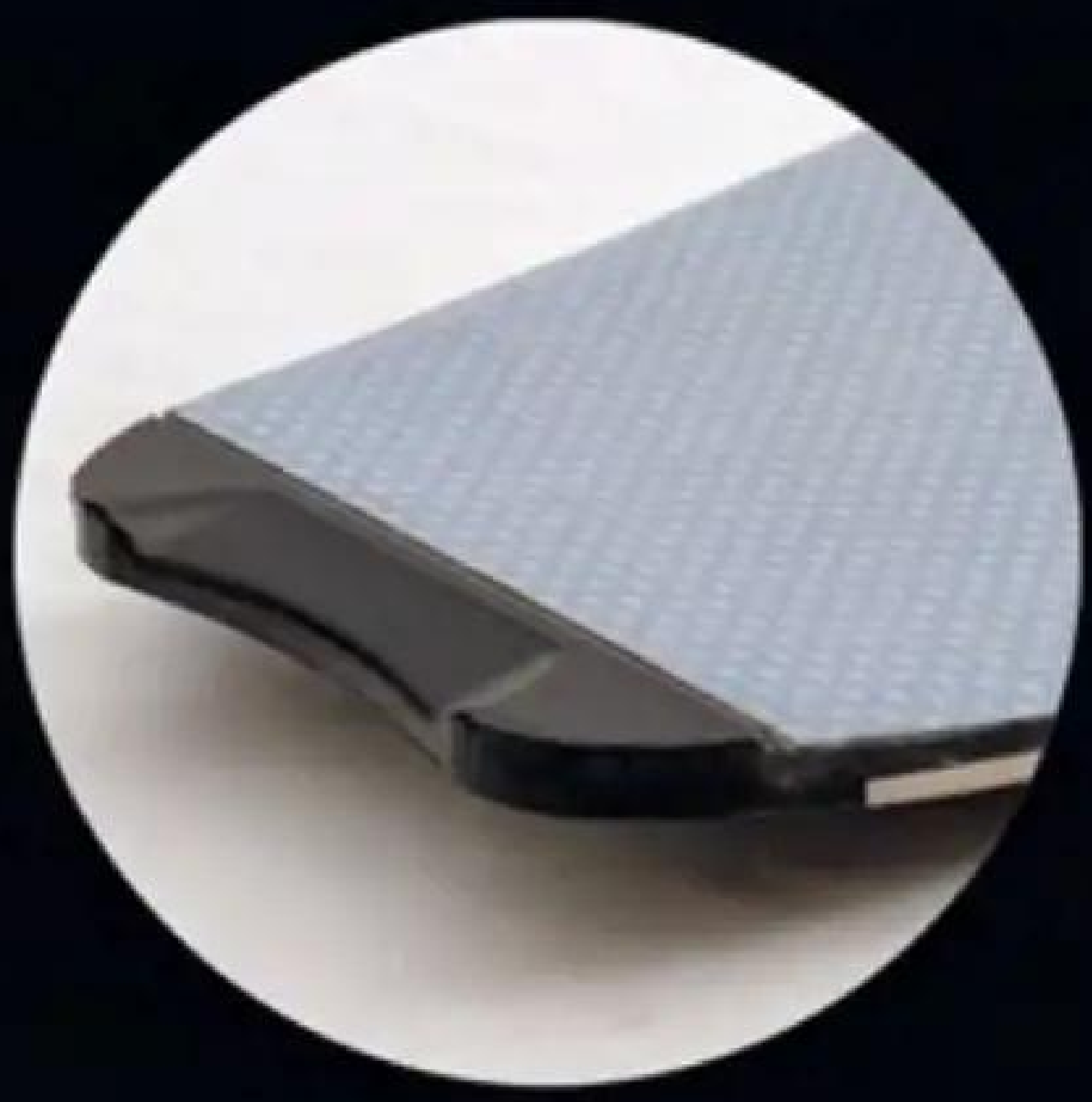

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GEAR GUIDE
20 SELECT 25
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p: Tyler Stevens
r: Weston Deutschlander

No News is Good News

Fast fashion has no place in the mountains. That's why we don't do collections and only change our products when we can improve them. So, there's really nothing new about these down jackets. The **Stellar Down Parka** still boasts the highest warmth-to-weight ratio in its class. Our 1010FP 9.3oz **Guide Hyperlight** emergency hoodie can't be improved until we find even lighter down. And our classic **Stellar Ultralight Down 2.0** — first launched in 2015 — remains the purest incarnation of our design philosophy, with its timeless design, user-refined performance, and sustainable quality.

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● ● ● ●

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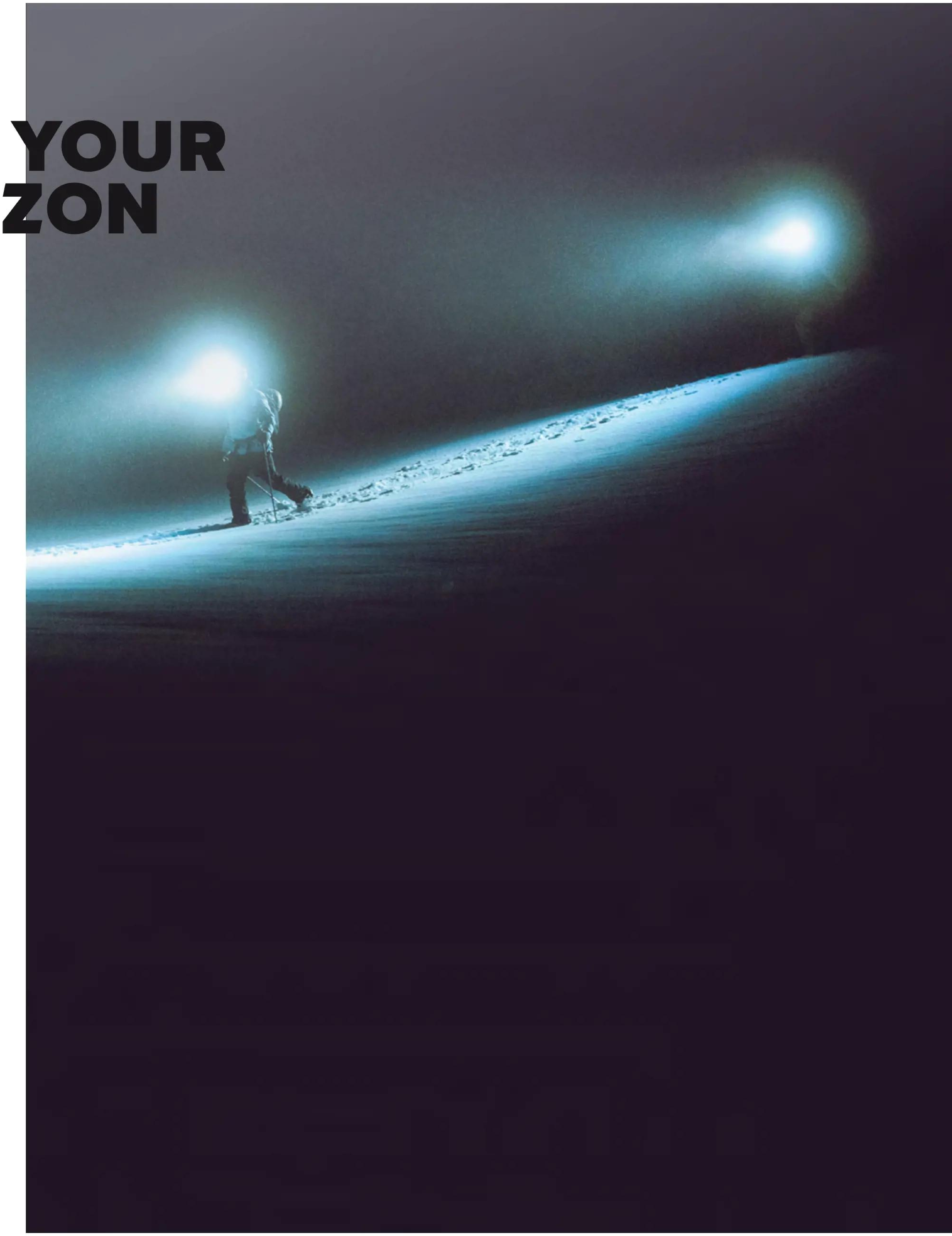

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BACKLAND
109

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***status August 2023, GWP raw materials**

ATOMIC
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184 CM
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GEAR GUIDE SELECT 20 25
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE

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After winning rookie of the year at the 2024 Gear Test Week, second-year tester Ian Halderman finds a pocket full of sunshine in the Powder Mountain sidecountry. **Iz La Motte**

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CONTRIBUTORS

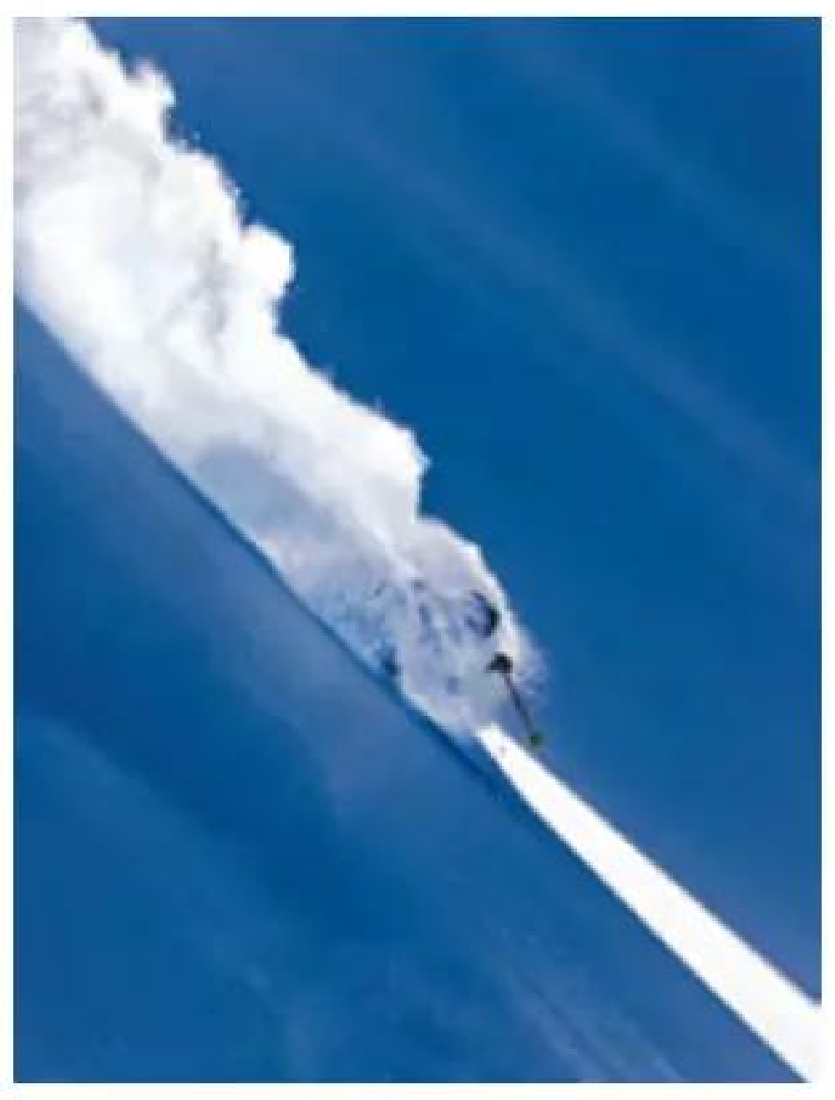
Our own senior editor and founder of *Couloir* magazine, **Craig Dostie**, might be one of the most famous telemark skiers in the world. (Our editor in chief name dropped him to get in with the local tele skiers in Japan). At our Gear Test Week, he oversees our tech crew with expertise, showing his knowledge of both AT and tele bindings. He reviews the latter, and some hot new boots, on p. 87.

As our board test director, **Drew Zieff** is passionate about all things sliding sideways, though snowbased sliding is his top pick. He's also passionate about manicured chest hair and freestyle rap. Luckily, our Gear Test Week includes all of his favorites. This year he even got (fake) married to his fiancé and fellow tester, Katie Botwin. Zieff shares his splitboarding expertise starting on p. 93.

Iz La Motte has soared high since starting her outdoor industry career as a *Backcountry* photo intern. Her work has taken her around the world with companies like Icelantic Skis, Stio and Smartwool. She also worked as a cinematographer on *Advice for Girls*. Despite being a big shot, she still makes time to shoot our Gear Test Week every March.

Backcountry Magazine designer **Karianne Shetter** made her way to Vermont in 2014. She has spent the past decade in the Green Mountains developing strong opinions about maple syrup and cheddar cheese. When she's not designing magazine pages, she can be found on the skintrack or, in warmer months, cruising singletrack with her dog, Nova, by her side.

Scott Stuntz has a long and eclectic resume: Iowa farm kid, NPR member station host, potato journal editor, bike shop manager, boot tech. The list goes on, and he uses most of those skills at our annual Gear Test Week, where he fits boots and channels Alex Trebek during one hell of a game night. More recently, Stuntz traded his boot oven for a pen, and reviews some of the latest AT boots starting on p. 40.



ON THE COVER

Fresh white canvasses and billowing powder are far from what first comes to mind for November skiing. But in Engelberg, Switzerland, where the 10,623-foot Mount Titlis catches early season storms on its north facing slopes, a late November day can deliver all the goods. In the words of photographer Oskar Enander, "No crowds, a deep and stable snowpack and a great crew," made such a day. Marcus Caston's powder plume says it all. ◘ **Oskar Enander**

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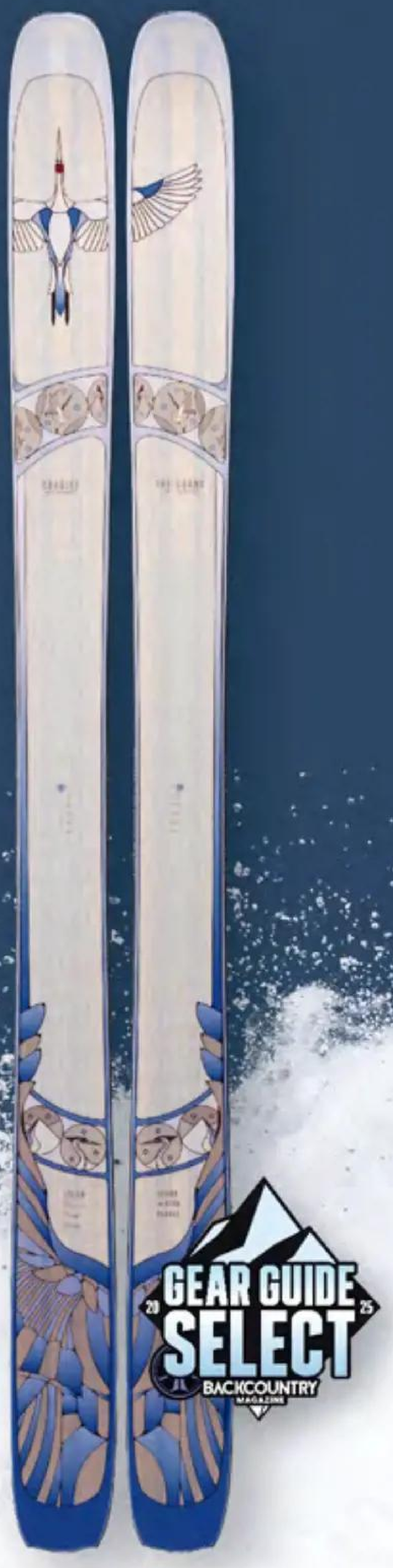
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"Explain this to me like I'm a 31 year old," I request.

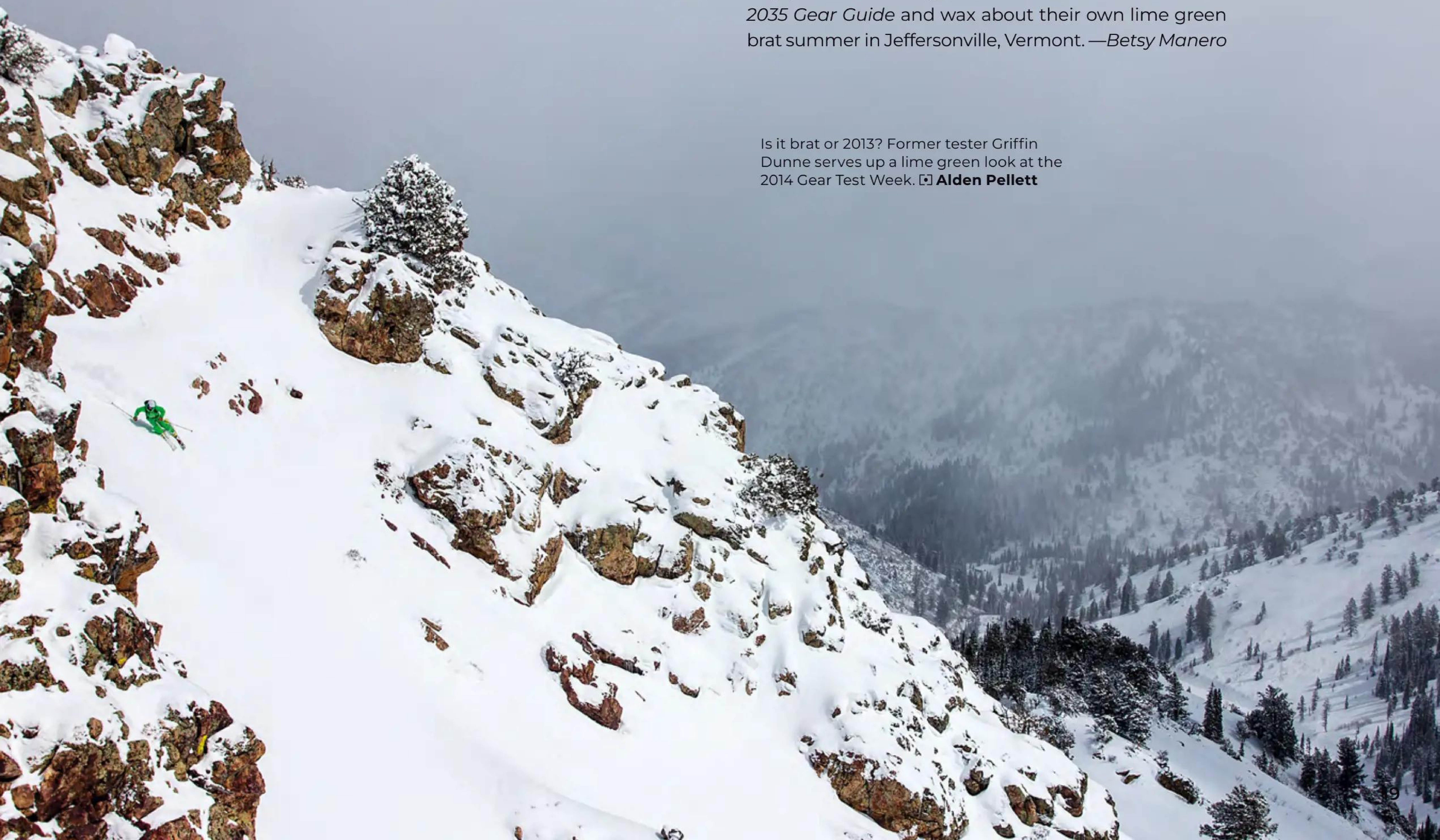
Our editorial team is meeting about the Gear Guide cover design, and, when asked what they think of the lime green color scheme, one of our interns says, "It's like brat summer."

Maggie, Rachel and Chaney—the three members of our Gen Z brain trust—go on to explain that we had Barbie summer last year, and now it's brat summer. Apparently, the social media trend revolves around British pop star Charli XCX, Vice President Kamala Harris and this exact shade of green. I refrain from telling them that I do, in fact, know who Charli XCX is. Her song "I Love It" was all the rage at college house parties in 2013.

That was the same year I was in their shoes, working as a *Backcountry* intern. Instead of a brat or Barbie summer, it was *binding* summer. When then managing editor Tyler Cohen handed me the Plum Guide, one of the Editors' Select bindings, my eyes widened. Talk about a trend change: Two toe pieces and two heels fit in the palm of my hand. Was there elastic travel or brakes? Hell no. But they only weighed a pound and a half. We debated how long it would take for frame bindings to go the way of leather telemark boots.

Backcountry innovations move slower than social media trends, which are cycling faster than Disney pumped out child stars in the early aughts. The last year frame bindings appeared in a Gear Guide was 2016. Shane McConkey put rocker in his skis in 2002, and it took 10 years for that trend to be widely adopted. I personally made the switch in 2011, when I bought a pair of K2 Brightsides. A look at that year's K2 catalog—which was covered in lime green—shows a ski that's pretty much fully cambered by today's standards. Like colors, technology comes and goes.

For 30 years now, *Backcountry Magazine* has reported on these trends and thousands more while hosting dozens and dozens of interns. Some of us have gone on to run the magazine. One day, Maggie, Rachel or Chaney may recall today's elliptical sidecuts and carbon-inlaid wood cores. If history is any guide, one of them may peer over a designer's shoulder at the cover of the *2035 Gear Guide* and wax about their own lime green brat summer in Jeffersonville, Vermont. —*Betsy Manero*



Is it brat or 2013? Former tester Griffin Dunne serves up a lime green look at the 2014 Gear Test Week. ▣ **Alden Pellett**

ARC'TERYX

Joe Lax
Pemberton BC | Lil̓wat7úl Territory

LETTER OF THE MONTH

CONTOURS
ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

Pilot
of the
Impossible

The Antarctic Peninsula is home to the unlikely. From a place where Shackleton and his men simply hoped to survive 100-plus years ago to the frozen home of a geopolitical turf war during and after WWII, to being a ski touring hub off a luxury cruise ship today, the peninsula seems utterly unchanged and miraculously unmarred by human activity. And what made Shackleton an unlikely hero in August 1916 is somehow inherited, at least a little, by anyone willing to risk being here. Because one thing remains true about this place: It can kill you quickly no matter how much courage you bring. But if you have money or desire–or both–one man can show you the enigma that is the White Continent.

Early Turns in Antarctica at 80-degrees South

This letter was in response to the Antarctica Contours, titled "64-degrees South," from The Historic Issue. *—The Editors*

The article about guided ski trips to 64-degrees south on the Antarctic Peninsula in The Historic Issue prompted me to write about my earlier trip to Patriot Hills—80-degrees south.

For reasons unknown, in the 1990s I had a dream of making telemark turns in Antarctica. Year after year I sent requests to Adventure Network International (ANI), the group that supported would-be climbers of Mount Vinson, Antarctica's highest and one of the seven summits. They had no interest in would-be skiers.

Much to my surprise, in 2002 ANI offered a trip to the South Pole and they were even willing to let me ski.

Late November found me in Punta Areanas waiting, with a group of hopeful climbers, for a break in the weather that would allow us to fly. There was only half an hour warning that the trip was on.

The four-and-a-half-hour flight from Punta Areanas on a huge Ukranian Ilyushin cargo jet brought us to the blue ice runway at Patriot Hills, 80-degrees south, about 600 miles from the South Pole and ANI's base in Antarctica.

Canadian Doug Stern was assigned to keep those of us not going to the Vinson Massif amused. He showed us vast under the ice storerooms filled with enough food to survive a winter if needed. Patriot Hills are better described as very low mountains of rock and ice. Doug talked about huge waves of ice at their foot. I told him I'd like to see these waves and maybe ski on them.

Eventually, the day came that my wish would be granted. I would get to ski. We rattled over the ice on a snow machine. What looked white like snow was bullet proof ice. Doug had brought skis too and soon we were skinning up Windy Pass.

Skins off, we traversed to the fall line. I got the feel of the ice and carved turns to the bottom of the hill. One more lap and it was time for lunch.

I was able to get much more skiing in later thanks to a snow machine running me up to the top of the pass. My dream of making telemark turns in Antarctica was fulfilled. The flight to the South Pole was a bonus.

MARK ADDISON
FRISCO, CO

*Mark, thanks for sharing a little bit about your incredible Antarctic adventure. Liam Doran and I are still processing the enormity of the place and the experience. All made possible by two Dougs! —*Adam Howard

The Ed Note

This letter was written in response to a newsletter titled "Do you read the Editor's Note?" about the Editor's Note in Issue 157. *—*The Editors

Hi Greta

I always enjoy the Editor's Note. I like the insight you get about the thinking behind each edition.

I produce a little magazine here (*Mountain Journal*) and always enjoy putting the 'intro' thoughts together after I've done all the edits.

Thanks to you and the *BC Mag* crew for such a beautiful magazine.

Regards,

CAM WALKER
FITZROY, AUSTRALIA

Corrections:

On p. 30 in *The Historic Issue*, we misspelled Matthew Tangeman's last name. Sorry Matthew!

In our profile from the same issue, on p. 95, we had a duplicated photo caption. The opening image should've been captioned: You've heard of mechanized ski access, but what about musher ski access? [Photo] Courtesy Arctic Hive. Apologies Arctic Hive and DJ Pierce for the mixup!

THE COMMENTS SECTION

Unlike a social media post, you can't leave your reactions to our stories right on the page. But we still want to hear from you. There's a lot to cover in the world of backcountry skiing and riding, and we value what our community thinks of what we're reporting on, and what we're not. Read something that resonates with you? Give us a proverbial like (send us an email about what hit home). Have feedback to share? Even better! The author whose letter we enjoy most will receive a NEO BT PRO from ARVA.

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We are a **[relatively]** new brand with some **[radically]** new ideas. Here's what customers are saying about their custom outerwear…

"BEST FITTING JACKET EVER - In all of my 45 years of downhill skiing I have never had a better fitting jacket. Usually I have to wear a jacket that is 2 to 3 times too big for me to fit around my weirdly shaped torso."

"LUCKY JACKET - As soon is it arrived the weather pattern changed and we finally got powder days. Fits like a glove with well positioned pockets for all my stuff. Easy pit zips for the uphills. Fun process to exactly spec the jacket I needed."

"UNREAL!!! - I love this jacket! The quality is amazing… went backcountry for 9 hours and it performs exactly as promised. Can't recommend enough!"

"NEW PANTS STOKE! - I love my new MADE pants! Lightweight and fit to my exact needs. Having the option to customize the colors and zipper/pocket placement is amazing for me as I like to make things my own. 10/10 would recommend!"

"TOLLE JACKE UND HOSE - Ich bin begeistert von der Qualität und Passform der Skijacke und der Skihose." (we don't even know what this one says, but the vibes seem to be pretty positive)

*We wrote a lot of words here for an ad. If you went to the trouble of reading all of them use code **BCMAG** to get 20% off your order.

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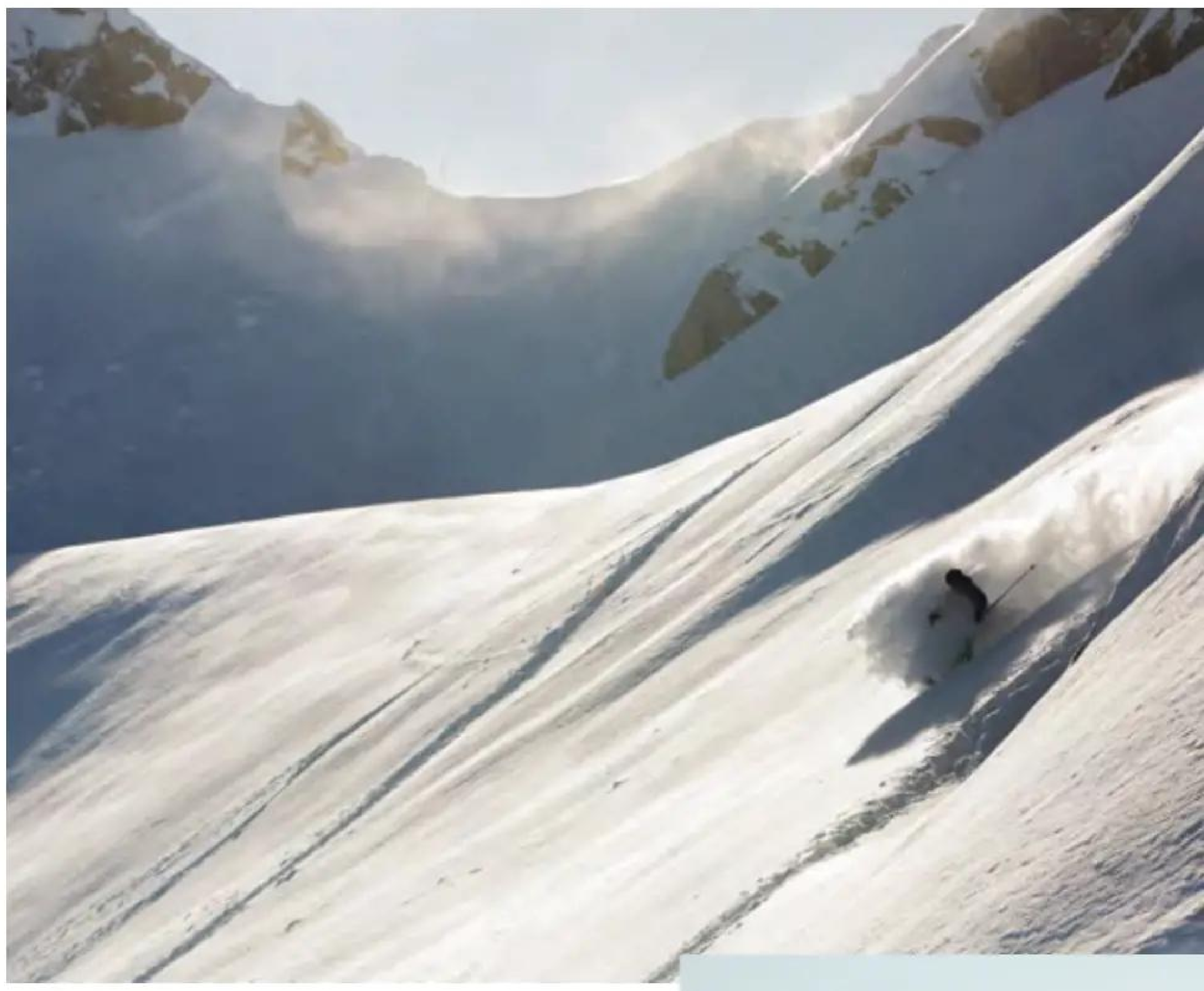

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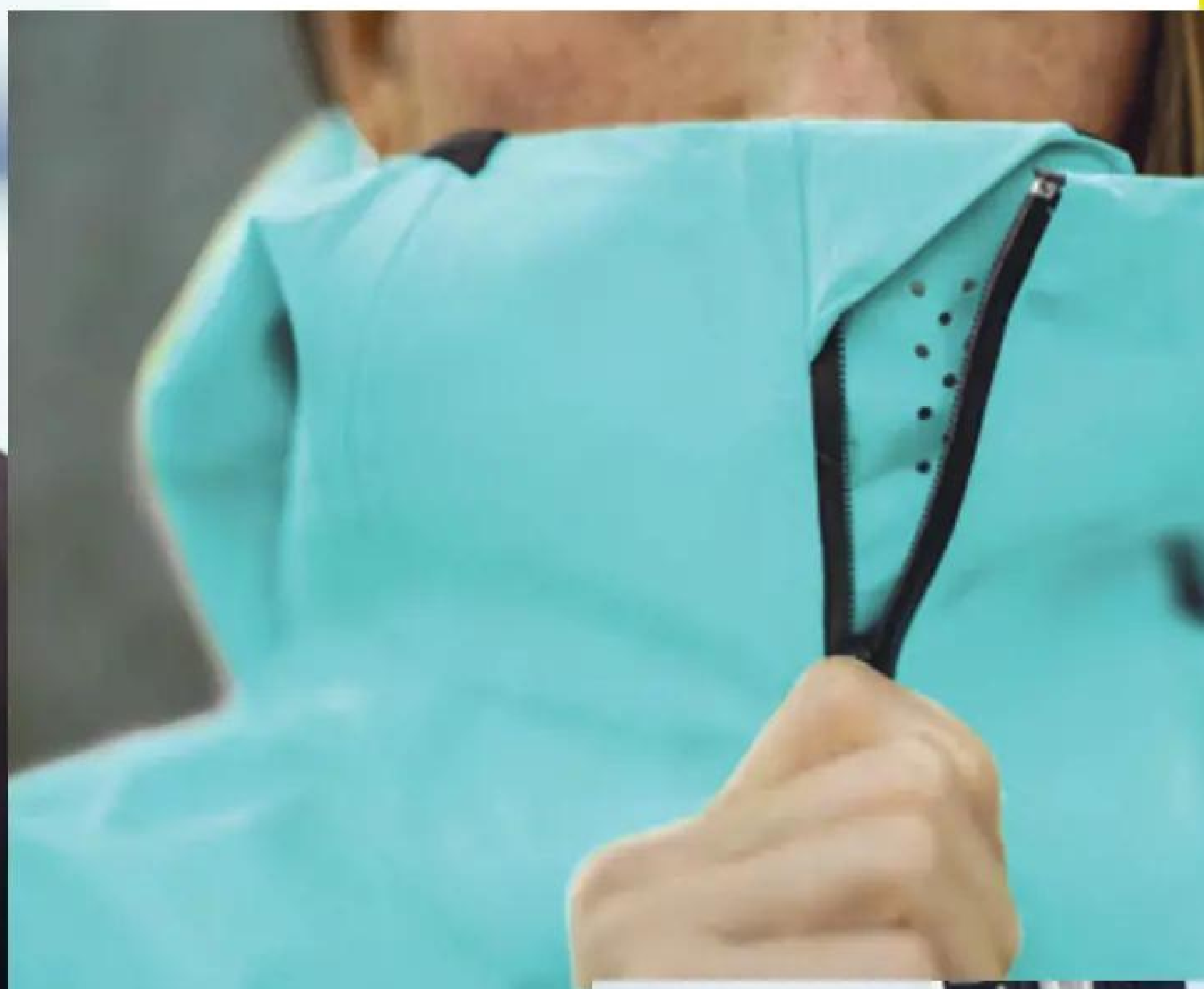

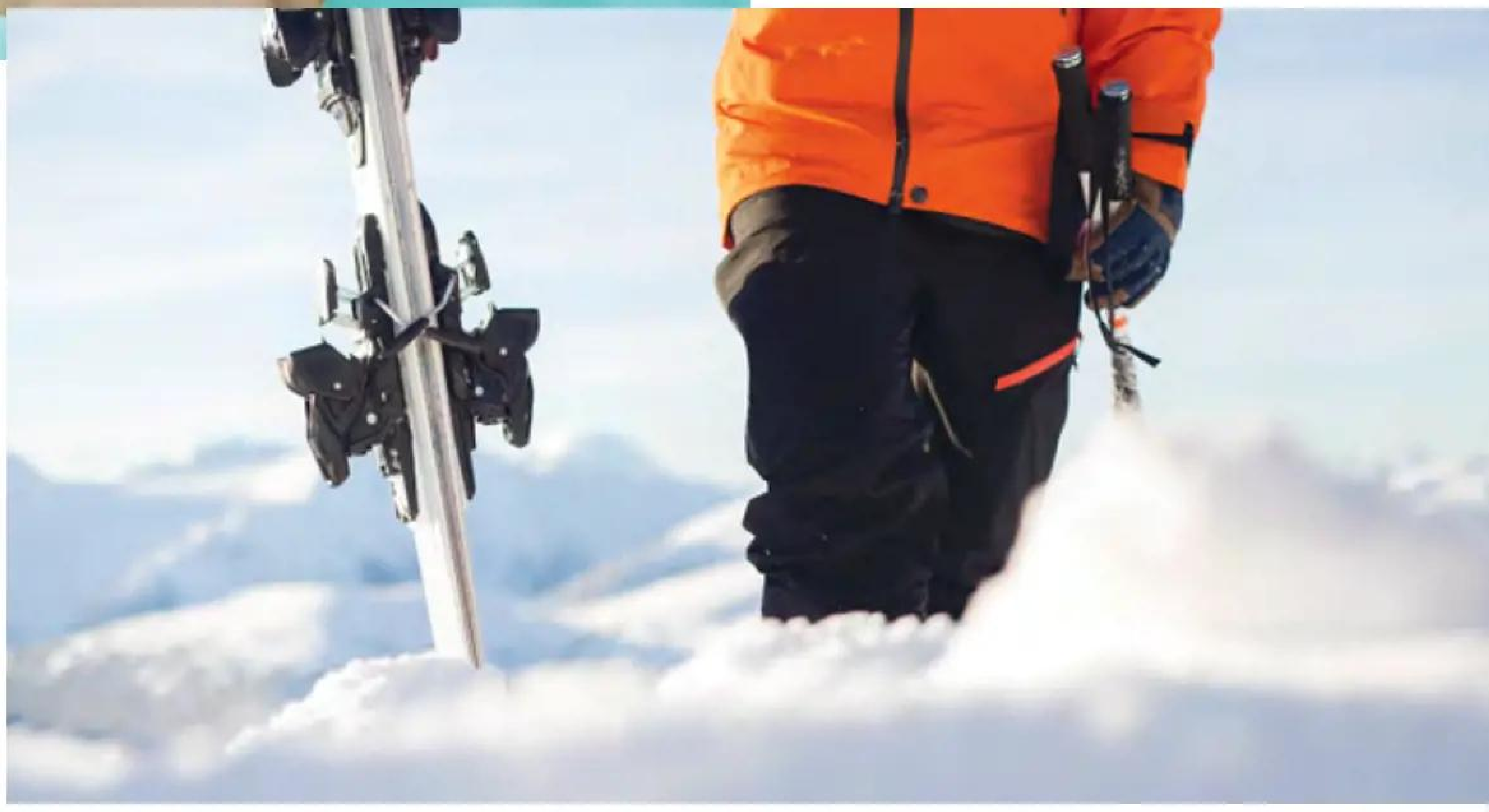

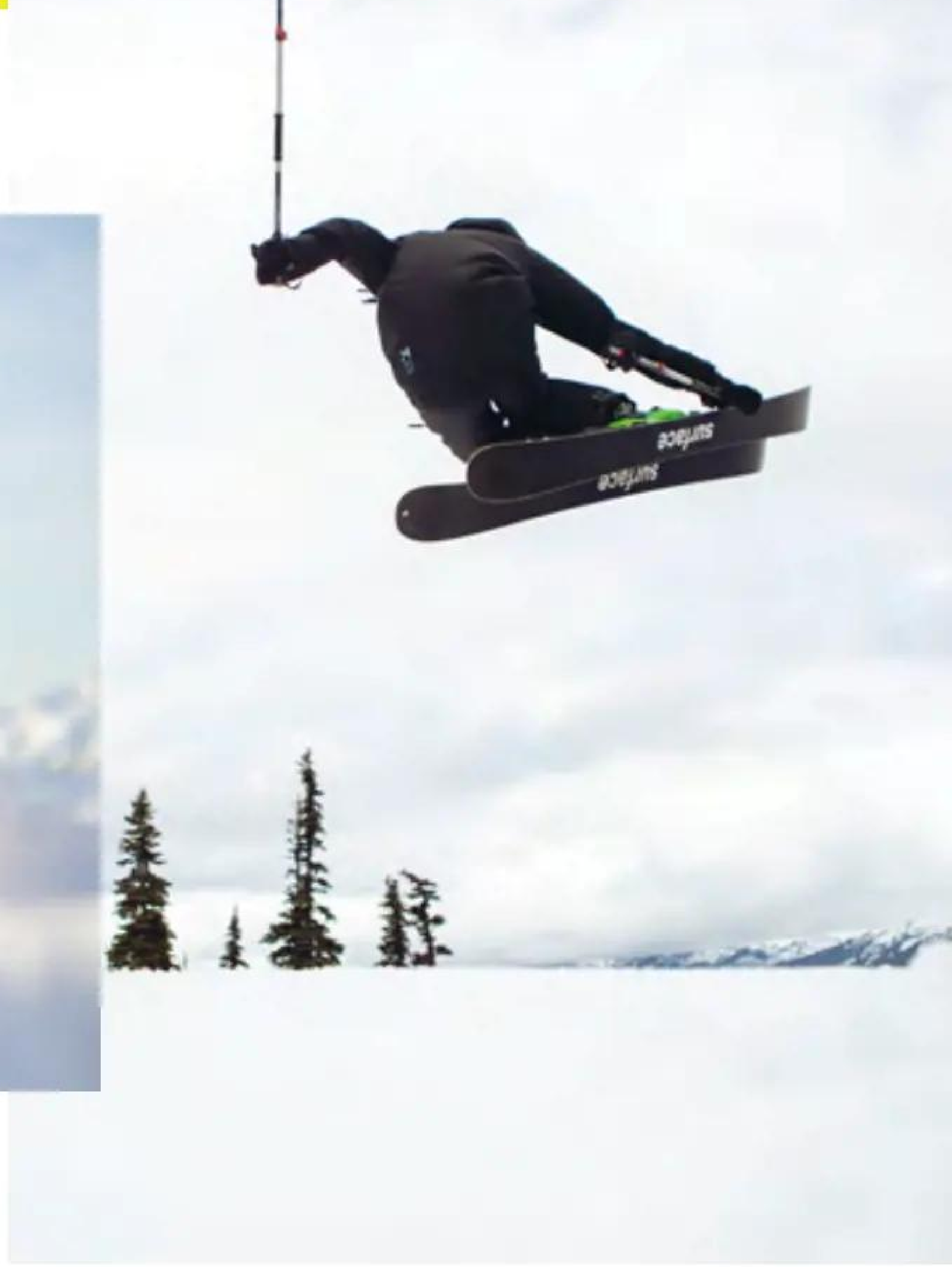

THE 2025 GEAR GUIDE

BEHIND THE SCENES

In our 18th year at Powder Mountain, we experienced a whole year's worth of weather in just five days. Snowstorms, wind closures and beachy sunshine were all a part of our annual Gear Test Week, but we're kind of like the U.S. Postal Service: Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these testers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds. So, each day, our testers rose at 7 a.m., hit the breakfast bar and caught the bus up to Powder Mountain, where they put 157 skis, boots, bindings and splitboards through their paces. At the end of the week, we compiled the 1,145 forms they'd filled out to make our selections for this, the *2025 Gear Guide*.

HOW DO YOU TEST GEAR?

Brands select which products will be sent to our test and each pays a small handling fee. (Running a 60-person test is expensive!) Each day, testers get out on six to eight products, submit a first impression score and then fill out a form detailing everything from notable features to ideal snow conditions to favored turn shape. At the end of the test, the editors read every form and build our Gear Guide off of tester's feedback.

WHY POWDER MOUNTAIN?

After 18 years, Powder Mountain has become *Backcountry*'s home away from home. We know the best runs to test on, where the snow softens first after a hard refreeze and how to find pow stashes three days after a storm. Plus, Powder Mountain offers a plethora of inbounds uphill access areas where we can test the walkability of boots and bindings. We also love the local Shooting Star Saloon and their famous Shooting Star Burgers.

WHAT ARE FREE, SPORT AND SPEED TOURING?

After 30 years of testing gear, we'd like to think we've figured some things out. One of our brilliant ideas is our three-category system, where we break down what skis, boots, bindings and, this year, hard shells are best for each touring style based on tester feedback, weight and shape. Free touring is the heavy, freeride-inspired stuff that's just as happy on chairlifts as on the skintrack. Speed is the ultralight category, aimed at the skimo curious. In the middle is sport touring, which combines approachable weight with versatile downhill performance.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN EDITORS' CHOICE AND A GEAR GUIDE SELECT?

All the products we feature carry our personal stamp of approval, meaning, they're all good. While a Gear Guide Select will excel in the field it's designed for, an Editors' Choice (EC) takes it one step further. The skis, boots, bindings, boards and apparel that carry an EC logo thrive in almost any condition. Additionally, we label last year's Editors' Choice winners, the products that women most enjoyed and the gear that will give you the most mileage for the least financial hit.

24 **'24 EDITORS' CHOICE**
♀ **WOMEN'S CHOICE**
$ **BANG FOR YOUR BUCK**

At the 2018 Gear Test Week, Wiley Picotte (pictured) earned the nickname Harkin. Editor-in-Chief Betsy Manero just learned that is not his real name at the 2025 Gear Test Week. **Iz La Motte**

Iz La Motte

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

This summer, the world's greatest athletes gathered in Paris to compete for Olympic Gold. Before any of them had even headed to the Olympic Trials, another elite though far lesser known group of athletes gathered at Powder Mountain, Utah, for our annual Gear Test Week.

Sure, the physical demands for our testers may look a bit different, but stamina, mental focus and high-performance are required just the same. Regardless, any athlete is only as good as their support team. For us, that's the cooks who keep our party of 60 bell-to-bell skiers and riders fueled; the techs, who make it possible for skiers to get on multiple boots, bindings and skis a day; and the one and only Iz La Motte, our photographer, who captures the week in all its glory.

Maybe we're not chasing Olympic Gold but pulling off Gear Test Week still takes a village. Best of all, we don't have to wait four years before ours is back together. —*The Editors*

◢ THE VILLAGE

TESTERS:
Adam Broderick
Adam Howard
Adrienne D'Elia
Alex Paul
Becca Friedlander
Chris Cloyd
Christine Raymond
Christopher Bush
Conor McNamara
Conor Sedmak
Coral Taylor
Damian Riddle
Danielle McCord-Padgett
Darren Padgett
Darrin MacLeod
Drew Zieff
Eric Tiffany
Ethan Jeannette
Gavin Cooper
Hazel Howard
Holly Howard
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Nick Sheahan
Patrick Gilroy
Teo Campbell
Toni Howard
Will Sardinsky
Wylie Picotte

TECHS:
Craig Dostie
Kevin McCarthy
Kyle Toohey
Liam McGee
Paul Capozzoli
Scott Stuntz

COOKS:
Caitlyn Kelly
Elliot Barnard
Rick Causey

QUALITIES OF A TESTER

DIVERSIFIED SKILLSET

Not everyone can skin and ski all day, chug Pub Ice (Ten Barrel Brewing's version of Smirnoff Ice) like its water, fill out eight forms, then party through the night for five days straight, or some combination thereof. But at the very least you need to be a bona fide skintrack crusher with a proclivity for costumes and a fondness (or at least high tolerance) for shenanigans. Good handwriting doesn't hurt either.

CRITICAL THINKING

How damp are these skis? Is the tail washing out? How intuitive was stepping into this tech toe? Is there a Pub Ice hiding in the pair of gloves my friend asked me to pass to them? These are the things our testers are constantly asking themselves—often all at once. When they sit down to fill out a form, these questions are crucial for how thoroughly they can fill out a form later, and if you want to come back to the Test, thorough forms are a must.

ICING. WHAT'S THAT?

Maybe you're familiar with this not-so-age old drinking game. If not, here's the gist: You hide an Ice (a very fizzy, sweet alcoholic drink that comes in a bottle), with the goal of someone discovering it unwittingly. When they do, they must drop to a knee and chug the whole bottle in one go—well that's the idea, it's much harder said than done. Play at your own risk: As it goes, if you give Ice you get Iced.

PUB
PUB BEER

BACKCOUNTRY
BACKCOUNTRY

AVABAG TOUR 28 S
ORTOVOX
LITRIC
TRAILBREAKING
AVALANCHE SAFETY
ELECTRIFIED
PROTECTION

Since 1980 it has been our goal to protect mountaineers. With our electronic airbag system, we are presenting a new milestone in avalanche safety.

LIGHTWEIGHT | ELECTRONIC | VERSATILE

reddot winner 2022
innovative product

ORTOVOX

When she's not smashing gates on the NCAA race scene, Hazel Howard loves to slow it down on long tours. She keeps the GS turns, though. **Iz La Motte**

SKIS, BOOTS & BINDINGS

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

Though we send brand invites for our annual Gear Test Week in February and have finalized submissions weeks before arriving at Powder Mountain, trends in a season's lineup don't become clear until well after the test. It's only when us editors begin parsing through testers' first impression scores, reading through forms and sifting through the compiled specs for every ski, boot and binding that a bigger picture emerges.

While years past have yielded a concentration of mid-range skis—the type that strive to be quiver killers—our latest test marked a shift toward ends of the spectrum. This doesn't mean a loss of versatility but rather a slew of setups which cater to the preference of the person driving them. There are lightweight carvers which power through crud and playful, wide-yet-light chargeable skis; three-buckle, 130-flex, 2,500-gram boots and their freeride counterparts with a Boa, two buckles and a generous ROM; and 15-RV equivalent, 790-gram tech bindings and those whose tech toe can be replaced with a Look Pivot. The adventure is yours to choose. —*Greta Close*

30 Editors' Choice Skis
38 Editors' Choice Boots
46 Select Skis
70 Select AT Boots
80 Editors' Choice AT Bindings
82 Select AT Bindings
87 Telemark Boots & Bindings

Products are ordered by descending waist width and weight per pair.

“A UNICORN SKI.”

BLACKCROWS | DRACO FREEBIRD

blackcrows
draco
freebird
181.7
11.0
21

QST
Echo
106 - 181

“SINGLE-QUIVER SKI.”

VÖLKL | BLAZE 104

VÖLKL
Blaze 104
BLAZE
104

EDITORS’
CHOICE
SKIS

FREE TOURING

STEREO
Lynx
FREERIDE
TOURING
186

“QUICK AND SNAPPY.”

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT | IMPULSE 98 TI

IMPULSE
TITANAL

black crows

◢ "BACKCOUNTRY TOOL."

SALOMON | QST ECHO

MADE IN GERMANY

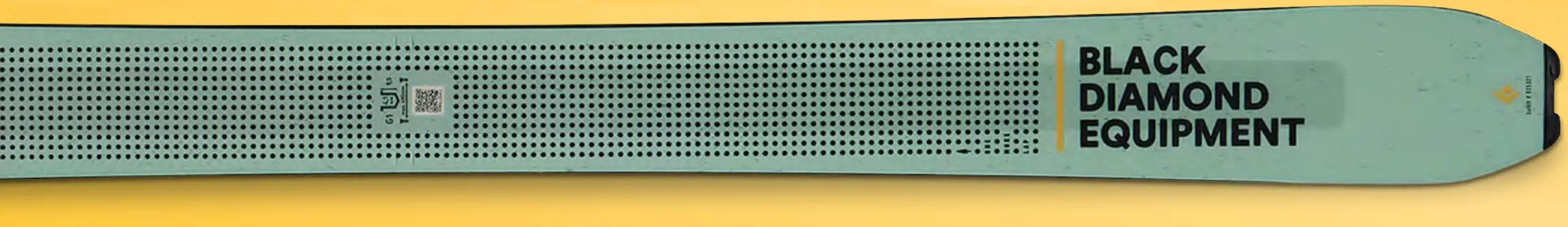
THE RESORT/TOURING CROSSOVER OF YOUR FREERIDE DREAMS.

Metal, hardwood and rocker are the main ingredients of these sending sticks. They thrive in big terrain and variable conditions, but at a cost: They're heavy.

20 EDITORS' 25
CHOICE

◢ "LIGHT BUT STABLE."

STEREO | LYNX MK 5


BLACK
DIAMOND
EQUIPMENT

WN
DR
WONDER ALPINE

◢ "RAILS LIKE A TRAIN."

WNDR ALPINE | VITAL 98

FREE TOURING

BLACKCROWS

DRACO FREEBIRD

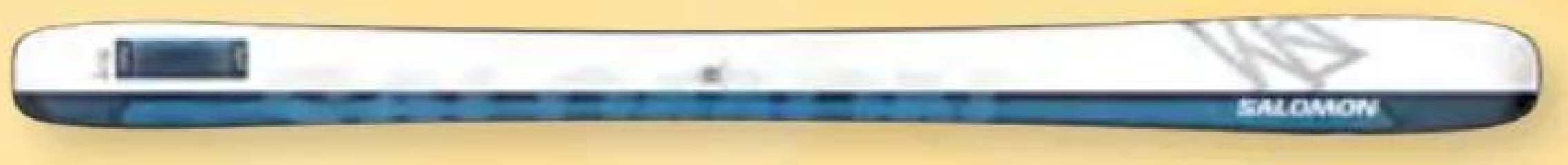
"An absolute battleship. It requires serious commitment and a power boot to match but man is there a huge payoff. Crushes any conditions." —Adam Howard

"For those seeking a unicorn ski, this is it. A twin tip, freeride powder ski," said a tester who has a high bar for unicorn sightings after more than 15 years of gear testing. A relatively unique twin tip design for a backcountry-oriented stick expectedly scored the Draco Freebird a 5/7 on playfulness. With the design process largely influenced by freeskiing madman Nikolai Schirmer, these birds begged to charge.

A straighter sidecut is best for long radius turns, per testers, and full ABS sidewall underfoot (capped in the tip and tail) lent even more stability. "Loves having a driver and is a fall line-oriented ski for advanced skiers," said a tester with a reputation for straight lining. Even with freeride ambitions, the Draco Freebird keeps things light with a 70% paulownia/30% poplar core sandwiched by damping fiberglass sheets. The poplar is strategically placed in strips underfoot and along the length of the ski for damping and binding retention. The Draco Freebird's "stable ride gave me confidence to charge through crud and pow," said a blazing fast freeride coach who was equally stoked on their "light and nimble swing weight."

If you're not interested in emulating Freeride World Tour lines, the Draco Freebird's moderate camber and short snow contact also allowed expert skiers to pivot and surf. "The Draco is slashy and quick despite its 110 waist," said a freestyle oriented tester. Another who's often picky extolled, "This ski will simply take care of you. It'll hold you tight, let you play and surf you into a state of euphoria."

BLACK-CROWS.COM | $1,150
3,650g (175) | 136/110/125 | 175, 181, 189



SALOMON

QST ECHO

"Smooth as BUTTAH! Lather this on any type of bready, crusty, dinner roll, it goes!" —Kelsey Colbert

"These skis fucking rip," exclaimed an East Coast tester of Salomon's second year Editors' Choice QST Echo. Returning unchanged for the '24/25 season, the Echo reflects the collaboration with Cody Townsend which drove the design of this, in the words of a tester, "backcountry tool."

A light but strong karuba/poplar core lined with strengthening basalt fibers makes this midfat "the standard for light ski backcountry performance," according to an I-70 shredder. Cork in the tip and tail, a hallmark of the QST line, keeps the Echo damp. The Echo is 200 grams lighter per pair than the QST 106. The touring version replaces its heavier linemate's metal mounting plate with cleverly shaped karuba stringers which lineup with binding screws. On snow, recycled double sidewalls aid in power transfer and edge hold while the ski's 6/7 score in playfulness comes from the generous tip rocker with slightly less in the tail and a shorter, well-cambered pocket underfoot. The result is "a great all mountain ski," according to one young hip dragger. "It's fun in powder, it plows through crud, and it can hold an edge on groomers at high speeds."

A Vermonter recognized the Echo's shortcomings, saying, "When chop or bumps happen, beware," but he was impressed overall with the "lightweight, go anywhere package." From the sidecountry to longer skintracks, the Echo proved intuitive, sporting "enough junk in the trunk to take down bigger, more committing lines," said a hard charging tester. Many recommended the Echo for the more experienced skier. If that's you, per a Teton dad-jibber, "This ski is the pick for a one-ski quiver: a do-it-all, everyday touring setup."

SALOMON.COM | $800 | 3,520g (181)
139/106/126 | 157, 165, 173, 181, 189

24 ♀

VÖLKL

BLAZE 104

"The Blaze 104 will never let you down. It handles any snow condition like a boss." —Bria McCurdy

A holy grail ski that does it all? The brand-new Blaze 104 comes pretty dang close, both floating through pow and confidently carving any size turns on packed snow. "Probably the most versatile ski on the market today," enthused a soul shredder who knows the market well after 10 years at our Gear Test Week.

Replacing the 106 as the second-widest model in the Blaze line, the 104 earned plenty of props for its effortless turn initiation. The secret sauce: what Völkl calls 4 Radius Drive, and what an OG tester termed a "game changer." The ski incorporates four different turn radii—at tip, front, underfoot and tail—to enhance each phase of a turn, from start to release. "This ski initiates whatever you're thinking," confirmed an 18-year-old racer with a high bar for turning performance.

The guts of the 104 include a sustainably sourced tip-to-tail poplar/beech core and a thin layer of titanal underfoot to provide stability without compromising liveliness. Like all skis in the Blaze line, the 104 has a rockered tip and tail (with shock-absorbing thermoplastic polyurethane inserts). Their width helps deliver float that had an easygoing tester "grinning ear to ear down my first pow run of the day."

If you're looking for a single-quiver ski, this might be your perfect match. "It's crazy how broad a range of people this ski will cater to," said the OG tester, echoing others who found the ski a solid charger yet forgiving enough to appeal to a range of skiers. Summed up another fan: "The Blaze 104 just makes you smile."

VOLKL.COM | $750 | 3,600g (179)
143/104/128 | 158, 165, 172, 179, 186

$ ♀

EDITORS' CHOICE

STEREO SKIS

LYNX MK 5

"Big days, small days, yummy days. Uphill ease meets downhill pizzaz. So. Much. Yum." —Alex Paul

These elusive felines garnered praise for meeting an equally elusive goal. "Performs like a race ski but light enough for any backcountry mission," an often picky tester enthused. "The Stereo Lynx was the best touring ski at the test," said another with over a decade of experience. "Best ski I've been on in years!" agreed a Coloradan who's been gracing our last 13 tests.

Stereo achieves this performance balance with a karuba and poplar core, carbon stringer and prepreg, triaxial fiberglass layup. The multi-directional fiberglass is meant to increase torsional rigidity and the prepreg construction reduces wet material and therefore weight. Each layer is pressed together in a Swedish factory that runs on 100% renewable energy, per the brand. Adding to the light but stable construction is a sandwich sidewall that's capped in the tip and tail. The resulting ski scored a 6/7 in versatility and dampness and "rips harder than a stoner in Boulder, Colorado," per a hard-charging tester. "Prefers to go fast and incredibly stable at speed."

Elliptical tip rocker, a touch of camber and slight tail rocker mean these cats aren't pigeonholed to fast, big turns. "These are amazingly nimble, even in larger sizes. They can make any turn shape or size," a Front Range ripper praised. It also scored above average on crud, pow and hardpack. One aspiring mountaineer said the Lynx is for "any condition you'd reasonably find when touring."

STEREOSKIS.COM | $1,050 | 3,220g (186)
130/100/118 | 170, 178, 186

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

IMPULSE 98 TI

"Sidecountry 50/50 with a strong boot. These soul sticks will keep you shredding till last call." —Ian Halderman

The new Impulse Ti might look like the Impulse skis of previous years, but under their bright topsheets there's something new. As the name implies, a sheet of titanal runs the length of these planks with the goal being, according to Black Diamond, to increase stability while maintaining off-piste performance without adding weight.

In order to not overpower the playful poplar core and beech stringers, Black Diamond added just one piece of titanal. Additional materials include damping elastomer layers and stiffening prepreg (more like double stick tape than the traditional wet resin) fiberglass. This year's identical men's and women's models have a reduced amount of fiberglass, shaving 20 grams off the weight despite the metal. Per an East Coast freeskier, "It was super easy to put on edge on a groomer and it floated through the pow." Playful yet stable? Check. No additional weight? Check.

Still, these aren't an uphill machine. Even strong legged testers placed the Impulse 98 Ti in the 50/50 resort/touring category. With a full ABS sidewall, long camber pocket and moderate rise in the tip and tail complimenting the Titanal sheet, these sticks had no problem jumping from groomers to shallow powder to chop. For more versatility, Black Diamond offers two mounting points: one traditional (better for carving) and one progressive, which is one centimeter forward (better for quick turns).

"Insane consistency in a variety of conditions," quipped a racer turned big mountain skier who used the back mount. A Vermonter on the progressive line added, "The radius on these skis allowed them to make big turns but they were also still able to be quick and snappy between trees."

BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM
$800 | 3,580g (182) | 132/98/119
161, 168, 175, 182, 189

♀

WNDR ALPINE

VITAL 98

"Built for days when you don't know exactly what you're getting into. They are super versatile and are confidence inspiring in a wide range of conditions." —Jocelyn Cuthbert

"The WNDR Vitals felt like the Taylor Swift of Gear Test," quipped a dedicated Swifty. "They spanned genres and suited a broad audience. The opposite of a one-hit wonder."

The Vital comes in a camber and a reverse camber profile. Other than the snow contact length underfoot, both share the same tech, including the bio-based algae. Algal stringers are poured over an aspen core, all of which bonds sans resin with the algal sidewall (also poured). Where resin is needed, WNDR uses their Super Sap, a petroleum-free alternative. It can be found holding the repurposed production waste together in the SpiralMade binding retention plate.

It's no surprise that the Camber version "rails like a train," per a Front Range ripper, while the Reverse version was called "extremely fun and playful" by his Tahoe counterpart. But the Camber still popped, and the Reverse could hold an edge. "Not just good for the planet," said a former ski racer who was unexpectedly drawn to the Reverse. "They also rip."

The medium stiff tail hardens underfoot before gradually softening in the tip, leading to top marks in versatility, powder and crud performance. "Even as conditions change with variable snow, it holds steady, easy to drive without getting tossed or chattering," said a small tester who often gets bucked in chunder. While advanced and intermediate skiers gravitated towards the Vital, one tester said, "It will take care of any skier ability in any conditions in and out of bounds."

WNDR-ALPINE.COM | $899 | 3,550g (183)
126/98/117 | 159, 165, 171, 177, 183, 189

♀

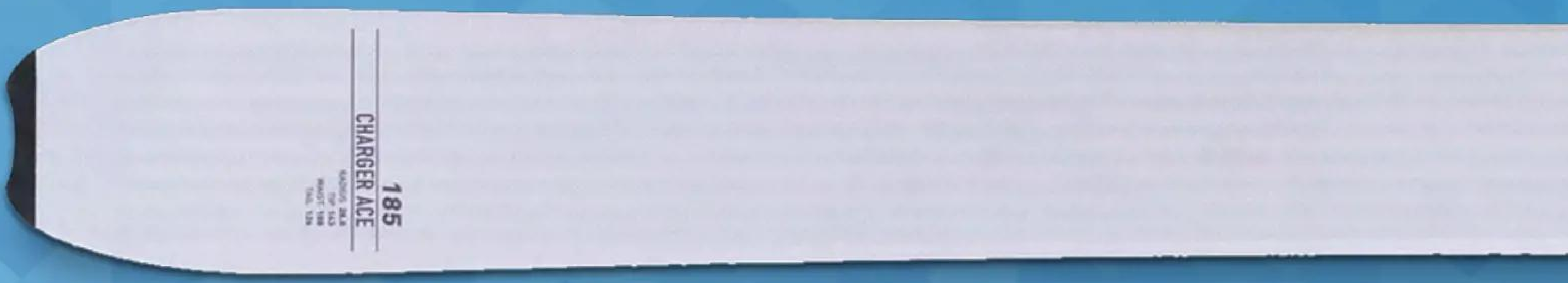
◢ “FOR TOURING POW.”

DPS | CARBON PAGODA TOUR CFL 112

ATOMIC
BACKLAND 109

◢ “BEEFY SKIING FLOATER.”

VOILÉ | CHARGER ACE


CHARGER ACE
185

EDITORS’
CHOICE
SKIS

SPORT TOURING

TRANSALP
CTi 105
178
MADE IN AUSTRIA

◢ “CONSISTENT SOUL-TURN RIDE.”

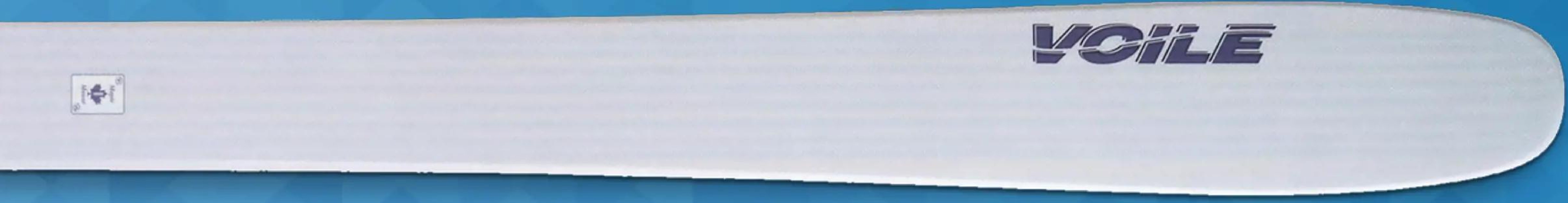
ROSSIGNOL | ESCAPER 105 NANO

ESC APER 105

HANDMADE IN THE U.S.A.
dps

◢ "AGGRESSIVE FREERIDE TWIST."

ATOMIC | BACKLAND 109



A VERSATILE BACKCOUNTRY OPTION FOR THE EVERYDAY SKIER.

These options toe the line between uphill and downhill performance, often achieved with high-tech fibers, specially milled wood and a meld of sidewall constructions.

20 EDITORS' 25
CHOICE

1924
FISCHER

◢ "MARRIAGE MATERIAL."

FISCHER | TRANSALP 105 CTI

178
ESCAPER 105 NANO
ROSSIGNOL

BLACK
DIAMOND
EQUIPMENT

◢ "GREAT LIGHTWEIGHT CARVER."

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT | HELIO CARBON 104

SPORT TOURING

DPS

CARBON PAGODA TOUR CFL 112

"Your new favorite touring partner that won't let you down no matter the conditions." —Maria Riek

"Built for touring pow, first and foremost, *and* they handle crud, tracks and firm snow surprisingly well due to the waist width and big tip rocker," said a tester who often tends towards skinny skis. "Super fun! Damp enough to charge but quick enough to wiggle in the tightest trees," raved a former racer.

Sure, the Carbon Pagoda Tour CFL 112's ample profile signals that it floats well in deep snow. But there's more than meets the eye. A paulownia core helps lighten the load. And the ski benefits from DPS's new carbon and flax laminate, which per the brand, gives torsional stability. Agreed an astute tester who skis with an upright stance, "The new laminate is very lightweight and adds structure to the core, helping to provide stability in deep snow." She also called the ski "forgiving and easy to maneuver." Stated another tester, "Perfect for a powder hound who wants to prioritize float and lightness but not fear for their life in crud."

For such a relatively wide ski underfoot, the 112 is surprisingly nimble, thanks to its generous rocker and 15-meter turn radius. "This ski reacts like an all-mountain slalom ski," said one happy Vermonter. Chimed in the ex-racer, "So much tip rocker and 15-meter radius make this 112 underfoot turn like a 56 racing ski." One lightweight tester recommended pairing the ski with a stiff boot for extra control; then "they'll cruise the hardpack effortlessly," she added. Overall, as one powder hound extolled, "This ski is built to be grabbed when Ullr delivers."

DPSSKIS.COM | $1,695 | 3,020g (178)
140/112/125 | 158, 168, 178, 184, 189

♀

ATOMIC

BACKLAND 109

"The Ford Ranger has been updated to an F-150." —Nick Sheahan

After years of slight tweaks, Atomic decided to overhaul this multiyear Editors' Choice ski. Enter the newly minted Backland 109, which keeps the weight down while adding a more aggressive freeride twist. Or, as one tester put it, "An intuitive ski that can seek out creative lines. Ample buoyance in powder. Softer, more rockered tail allowed for slashing turns and checking speed."

Atomic reduced the amount of fiberglass under the recycled topsheet and thickened the poplar and karuba in the core. The result is a lower carbon footprint, lower weight and, according to testers, better flex pattern. "More wood and less fiberglass improve suspension," said a Teton ripper. The HRZN Tech Tip keeps it's boat-hull shape (10% more surface area than a flat tip) and now has small cutouts near the edge to reduce weight even more. "It improves swing weight," said that same tester. When it came to variable terrain, the core and tip join the new profile (less camber, more tail rocker) for a versatile performance. "Although it excels in soft, clean snow, it'll hold its own in crud and chop," explained a freeride athlete.

Heavier testers preferred the new design. "More tail rocker than the previous generations, which allows the ski to slash out of turns quicker," said a 200-pound carver. His weight classmate added, "Nice, rounded flex that accommodates a wide range of turning shapes. Releases cleanly through the turn. Poppy." Smaller testers struggled, with one saying, "Sluggish to turn unless you're going fast." But for those with strong legs, our Teton ripper explained, "It might just make critics of the previous version's lack of tip strength reevaluate this ski entirely."

ATOMIC.COM | $975 | 3,080g (184)
135/109.5/124 | 176, 184, 189

VOILÉ

CHARGER ACE

"The old cliché of a one ski quiver has never been more true. These skis have boundless energy, responsiveness and feedback like a high-performance race car. Performs equally well on hardpack or powder." —Damian Riddle

In order to pull an EC for the Charger Ace two years in a row, Voilé stacked the deck. Meaning, they kept their usual approachable and playful profile, but beefed it up with a freeride oriented core. "I've spent so many backcountry days on Voilé. It's awesome they're extending their range," said one tester who has skied the Charger line since it came out in 2011.

The secret to this ski is balance. The early rise tip, minimal taper, long camber pocket and 20-meter turning radius balance pop and stability. Inside the ski, the construction balances weight and drivability. Two sheets of carbon and fiberglass sandwich a paulownia core, which is inlaid with a maple mounting plate underfoot. While the denser wood adds weight, it works with half-capped sidewalls to up hard snow performance. "The sidewall edge hold and damping improve the hard snow capabilities while the tried-and-true Voilé shape plays with the soft snow," said a ski mountaineer. A freeride coach raved, "Don't be fooled by the lightness of this beefy skiing floater. Put on a light and supportive boot and reap the rewards of free touring power in a light setup."

The results yielded praise from a variety of testers. Those pushing 200 pounds found them best for railing wide turns, while short testers favored small radius turns. According to one veteran tester, "This is for any intermediate to advanced skier with a nuanced understanding and appreciation of the relationship between supple response and assertive drive."

VOILE.COM | $995 | 3,182g (178)
140/106/124 | 157, 164, 171, 178, 185

24 ♀

EDITORS' CHOICE

FISCHER

TRANSALP 105 CTI

“Formula 1 car. Tuned. Fast. Dependable and one hell of a ride. Cult favorite in chop.” —Jon Lange

“Much like the topsheet, this ski is elegant, consistent and good clean fun. But make no mistake, it’s got that dawg in them,” said one tester, who would “100% let this ski date my daughter.”

What makes the Transalp 105 CTI marriage material? Perhaps it’s the Air Tec core. According to Fischer, the special milling pattern in the paulownia core reduces weight by 25% without sacrificing stability. Someone’s daughter agreed, saying, “Lightweight, yet torsionally stiff.” While heavier skiers were a fan of the strong backbone, thanks to carbon stringers and the hourglass shaped, 0.5-millimeter titanal mounting plate, she noted, “They can be a bit chattery in harder snow.” The Transalp might be a casual fling for her, but her own daughter—a decorated ski racer—disagreed: “Not too heavy, but heavy enough not to chatter. It has the perfect amount of stiffness.”

Testers agreed that the Transalp belongs with someone who can put the vertical sidewalls on edge. “Different tip from other brands,” said one of the long camber pocket, nearly flat tail and low tip rise. The design is borrowed from the freeride oriented Ranger series and reminiscent of the traditional profile of skis past, meaning it needs to be driven by “someone who can press the front of a boot,” explained a tester with an upright stance.

While the traditional profile sacrificed pop in powder, the dampness and stability made up for it in crud and hardpack performance. “An all-mountain ski. Perfect for any conditions and can be used on East or West Coast,” summarized our ski racer, who will be introducing this ski to her parents.

**FISCHERSPORTS.COM | $950 | 3,060g (178)
139/105/124 | 164, 171, 178, 185**

24

ROSSIGNOL

ESCAPER 105 NANO

“Light, stable and predictable, the Escaper 105 delivers in typical Rossi fashion.” —Darren Padgett

“A really fun and predictable ski to enjoy a wide variety of terrain and conditions with,” said an all-mountain shredder. “I would suggest it to someone who is looking for a playful all-mountain ski that can handle most terrain,” echoed another.

A light poplar core (30% lighter than regular poplar, per Rossignol) and a thin nano top sheet shave grams off this ski. “One of the lighter skis in the sport touring category,” said a Tahoean familiar with the type. Plus, Rossignol’s Aero Profile (the brand’s proprietary top sheet profile) reduces swing weight for more maneuverability, per the brand, and testers appreciated the ski’s easy turnability, enhanced by the almost-flat tails. The Escaper 105 Nano is a great pick for “someone wanting to wiggle down some dad pow and save weight while doing it,” said a Montanan charger. Another tester thought the ski excelled at medium- to long-radius turns, commenting that the “vertical sidewalls allow the edge to respond well to direct pressure for quick response.”

A nano basalt layer and nano titanal underfoot add shock absorption, says Rossignol, but a few testers quibbled with the ski’s stability. One 6-foot-tall Coloradan who said “the weight to dampness [ratio] is shocking” also found the ski “a bit reactive in crud.” But overall, as another Centennial State resident put it, “If you like a consistent soul turn ride on a Rossi vibe, this is it.”

**ROSSIGNOL.COM | $800
2,800g (179) | 135/105/125
170, 179, 187**

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

HELIO CARBON 104

“The Helio 104 Carbon is a perfect powder touring ski for either side of the country but favoring the deep snow in the West.” —Lance Riek

The Helio Carbon returns to the Editors’ Choice rostrum, this time in the 104-waisted model. Why did this option beat out its narrower siblings? “This ski is for the folks who go out in all conditions and any terrain,” said a tester who has sampled every iteration since the Helio hit the market.

Versatility is achieved with a clever carbon cocktail. A paulownia core is inlaid with carbon stringers. To keep weight down while adding stiffness, Black Diamond employs a prepreg (a sheet preloaded with dry glue) carbon overlay. Since carbon can be chattery, they also added pieces of damping elastomer between the various layers. “Really great lightweight carver,” assessed a PNW volcano skier.

The layup pairs with a profile designed for soft snow: moderate tip and tail rise, a long camber pocket, generous taper and full ABS sidewalls. “A fine balance of materials and construction. Nice job, BD!” quipped a tall, tech-minded tester. “These skis prefer long turns and can feel sort of dead at slower speeds,” one Montanan remarked. “Overall fun and versatile for many skier types,” he added and still awarded the Helio Carbon 104 a 5/7 overall. One of his fellow statesman concluded, “The Helio 104’s tip rocker and 104 waist float new dumps of powder easily. The rounded tails help make crud more manageable but more tail rise would help with breakable crust.”

**BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM
$950 | 2,760g (172) | 131/104/118
160, 166, 172, 178, 184**

♀

EDITORS' CHOICE BOOTS

FREE TOURING

PROGRESSIVE FLEX AND INBOUNDS PERFORMANCE WITH A WALK MODE.

What these boots lack in range of motion, they make up for with true 120-plus flex ratings, alpine-binding-compatible soles and adjustable forward leans.

◢ "A SOLID AND POWERFUL BOOT."

DALBELLO | CABRIO MV FREE 120 IF

◢ "COMPLETELY RELIABLE AND REFINED."

LANGE | XT3 TOUR LIGHT 130 MV

◢ "BUILT TO CHARGE."

SALOMON | SHIFT ALPHA BOA 115 W

SPORT
TOURING

AT HOME NAVIGATING STEEPS, WIGGLING POW AND EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN.

Despite a generous range of motion and minimal weight, these boots can still drive a 110-underfoot ski thanks to creative buckles and a medley of materials.

◢ "WALKS REALLY WELL."

TECNICA | ZERO G PRO TOUR

◢ "ANOMOLY OF A BOOT."

SCARPA | 4-QUATTRO PRO

◢ "THE BOOT I WOULD GET."

ATOMIC | BACKLAND XTD CARBON 115W

EDITORS' CHOICE BOOTS

FREE TOURING

DALBELLO

CABRIO MV FREE 120 IF

"If you have a big, wide foot and love lift service to take you 90% of the way, with the last 10% being a boot pack, this boot is for you." —Darrin MacLeod

"For short or long walks to terrain where a solid and powerful boot on the descent is important," said a freerider of the Cabrio MV Free 120 IF, part of Dalbello's new mid-volume line of three-piece freeride touring boots. The bi-injected Pebax tongue has softer plastic in areas prone to bending the most in walk mode, yet it still offers ample support on the downhill. "The tongue provides that progressive feedback that the best three-piece alpine options are known for," said a tester well-versed in touring boots.

Solid downhill performance may come at the cost of uphill mobility. A veteran skintrack crusher gave the boot high marks in all categories except walk-mode range. "This heavier boot is comfy, with a plush feel that babies your feet on the way down," he said. "It does not baby your quads on the way up." Nonetheless, he added that "the thick liner with well-designed tongue makes this boot a pleasure to wear for long days." The freerider agreed on the fit, saying, "The liner of this boot wraps the forefoot well with an autofit tongue that comfortably curves to the shin contour."

Also enhancing fit: The middle buckle (of three) is affixed to the polyamide composite shell's ankle pivot point to maximize heel hold, says Dalbello. One ex-racer who prefers beefier boots noted, "The instep buckle has a lock feature that works well unless you are maxed out on the buckle ladder."

**DALBELLO.COM | $700 | 3,960g
FLEX: 120 | LAST: 101mm | SIZES: 24.5-30.5**

SALOMON

SHIFT ALPHA BOA 115 W

"Those who value downhill performance will likely think the weight is worth it for the performance payoff." —Katie Cooney

Salomon got creative with their latest addition to the freeride-focused Shift line: the Shift Alpha Boa boot. "The downhill performance is hard to beat," said a Wasatch brunette. "Capable for the resort and strong, but you'd be happy in them for a shorter backcountry mission," added her blonde Teton counterpart.

A polyurethane shell and polyolefin and pex recycled cuff incorporate "subtle but impressive design notes," according to the brunette. Connecting through the shell and cuff where Achilles meets calf is Salomon's Freespine tech. The rigid plastic wedge rises to within an inch of the top of the cuff, strengthening the rear of the two-part boot, earning the 115 W model a 6/7 score on fore/aft and lateral stiffness from our testers.

An Exobelt stretches from inner ankle bone to upper foot where it meets a Boa-tightened cable. Lines along the shell's overlap gauge tightness, while an adjustable tongue allows additional customization for this midvolume, midwidth boot, per testers.

For the skintrack, a simple door-like tab detaches the cuff from the Freespine. "Range of motion isn't great," said a tester of the claimed 55-degrees, "but it improved with use." For sidecountry laps and shorter tours, she was fine to sacrifice some walkability, saying, "This boot can ski!" "Super fun on the descent and feels built to charge," echoed another.

**SALOMON.COM | $850 | 3,340g | FLEX: 115
LAST: 98mm | SIZES: 22.5-27.5**

♀

LANGE

XT3 TOUR LIGHT 130 MV

"If you love a 50/50 boot but want to walk further without sacrificing much at all, this boot feels like an inbounds boot!" —Ian Halderman

The most recent iteration of the Lange XT3 Tour retains the essential Lange-ness while sharpening its touring ability even more. "The magical minds at Lange cracked the code on a killer ski boot that walks better than it should," wrote a Tetons-based tester.

Like the first version of the XT3 Tour, it combines a four-buckle feel with touring capability. "For everyone who loves Lange," wrote a veteran tester, "completely reliable and refined." This latest version shaves 100 grams by replacing the more traditional aluminum buckles with a lighter-weight cable/buckle hybrid mechanism. Lange kept the tried-and-true Lyfran construction and V-lock mechanism, which, per the brand, connects the lower shell and cuff just like an alpine boot while in downhill mode.

The XT3 comes with a touring sole capable of pairing with multinorm compatible bindings. The walk mode locks the cuff with an internal piece which connects to the lower. This delivers enough power transfer to drive a stout ski and allows a 53-degree ROM. Inside the boot, one tester noted, "The liner was thin and super spongy."

While not having the ROM of light-weight touring boots, the consensus among the testers was that its weight-to-skiing ability ratio was on point. "The XT3 Tour should be matched with a heavier more robust AT binding and a solid all-mountain ski for the resort until the time is right to head out into the sidecountry," wrote one tester.

**DYNASTAR-LANGE.COM | $1,000 | 2,900g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 24.5-29.5**

SPORT TOURING

EDITORS' CHOICE

SCARPA

4-QUATTRO PRO

"Traditional four buckle with the accompanying stiffness and comfort and one of the best walk modes and range of motion on the market." —Damian Riddle

The Quattro line both tours well and is capable of driving frontside skis. The Pro keeps that backcountry capability while sharpening its in-bounds performance. Only 55 grams heavier than last year's EC winning 4-Quattro XT, the benefit of that weight is a flex rating of 130+ compared to the XT's plain ol' 130. A tester who has skied Scarpa boots for several years called them an "anomaly of a boot," remarking on its progressive, soft-off-the-top flex.

A redesigned cuff incorporates a stiffer back with a lower front, intended to provide more precise power transfer. The liner boasts a plastic-reinforced tongue as well as slightly tweaked construction and the Grilamid shell's carbon core is replaced by a combination of Grilamid and pebax. "An excellent blend of ski feedback and dampness," said one tester.

"The ease of use and range of motion of the walk mode exceeded all of my expectations," said another. The 4-Quattro Pro uses a similar overall design to the more touring-oriented Scarpa Maestrale, resulting in the same 60-degree stated ROM. However, with two aluminum supports instead of one, the walk mode mechanism is sturdier. Another noticeable feature is a lock intended to ensure the boot can't come out of ski mode when pushed to its limits. "Pro is actually an apt moniker," wrote a seasoned Vermont-based tester. "Patrol? Guide? Check and check. Pro skier? Yup."

**SCARPA.COM | $949 | 3,110g | FLEX: 130+
LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 24.5-33**

ATOMIC

BACKLAND XTD CARBON 115 W

"It felt like a dainty slipper but slayed the downhill unlike other boots in its class." —Bria McCurdy

Much to millennials' chagrin, Gen Z is resurrecting the Ugg boot. But, per one high school senior, this Backland is better: "I'm currently sitting inside and chose to keep these boots on versus putting on my Uggs. That's just how great it is." An elder millennial added that, unlike her old unsupportive Uggs, these "felt wonderful to walk uphill in."

While the liner might not be fleece-lined, testers did award it a 5/7 for quality and warmth, an unusually high score for such a tourable boot. Additionally, they were impressed by the cable buckle on the forefoot, which evenly distributes pressure on a variety of foot shapes and locked the heel into place. "I don't need to unbuckle them on the lift ride up," said one satisfied tester. She also kept that lower buckle fastened on the skintrack. A back lever can be opened for a claimed 74-degree ROM, achieved by ditching the tongue in favor of a waterproof gaiter over the ankle.

Missing that piece of the boot might seem like a recipe for downhill disaster, but the wrap-style polyamide cuff is backed by a carbon spine on the rear, which connects to more carbon-infused polyamide in the lower shell for a progressive flex. "This is an uphill boot but has enough body to feel good for the down too," said our elder millennial. Her Gen Z counterpart, who competes on the youth freeride circuit, added, "If I were to get a boot that I could use skinning and in a resort, this is the boot I would get."

**ATOMIC.COM | $1,100 | 2,580g | FLEX: 115
LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 22-27.5**

♀

TECNICA

ZERO G TOUR PRO

"I was impressed with the rear and lateral stiffness. It skis almost like a Cochise, but tours like the classic Zero G." —Mike Parri

The redesigned Zero G Pro boasts 10% more range of motion in walk mode and is 200 grams lighter, but testers were more focused on the downhill performance, with two testers comparing it to Tecnica's freeride-focused Cochise line.

Ironically, tech borrowed from the skimo-inspired Zero G Peak enhances the ski quality, namely the Power Frame Construction and the Double Blocking walk mode. Co-injected bands of Grilamid (forward) and carbon (back) connect the ankle's pivot point to the walk mode, where the walk/ski lever is anchored to both the shell and above the cuff hinge for a more progressive flex, per Tecnica. "The newly designed lower cuff now incorporates lateral carbon stiffening bands that completely resolves the rotational waffling of last year's," said a tester who has lived in the Zero G line since their 2019 release.

Tecnica raised the bottom of the Grilamid cuff to allow for a longer forward stride and a higher instep. "The fit is slightly roomier for those whose insteps were limited in the old Zero G," raved a Montana boot nerd. Along with the adjusted instep, the stock liner averaged a 6/7 and the toe box is wider, which made one sensitive-toed tester say, "This boot fit my medium volume foot with no adjustments needed." After a longterm side-by-side test with last year's model, a ski guide deemed, "In tour mode, nothing was that different. It still walks really well for a four-buckle boot and didn't sacrifice anything for the increased stability."

**BLIZZARD-TECNICA.COM | $899 | 2,578g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 24.5-30.5**

◢ "RESPONSIVE AND SOLID."

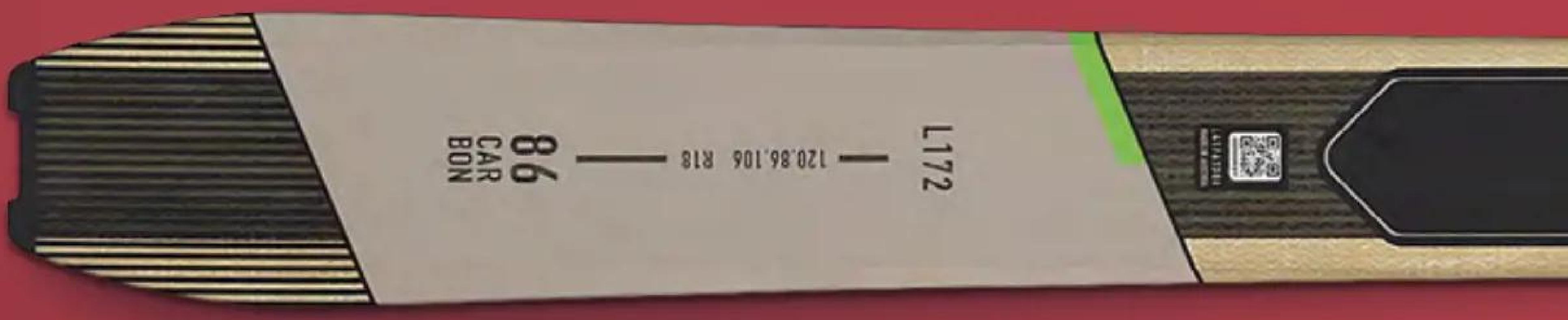
HEAD | CRUX PRO

◢ "FOR COMMITTING LINES."

DYNAFIT | RIDGE PRO BOOT

◢ "STIFF, POWERFUL BOOT."

LA SPORTIVA | KILO



SPEED TOURING

EDITORS' CHOICE
SKIS + BOOTS

THE ÜBERLIGHT GEAR BEST FOR TYPE III FUN.

Skinny skis and no-buckle boots dominate this minimalist category which is just as at home on the skintrack as it is in your local skimo race.

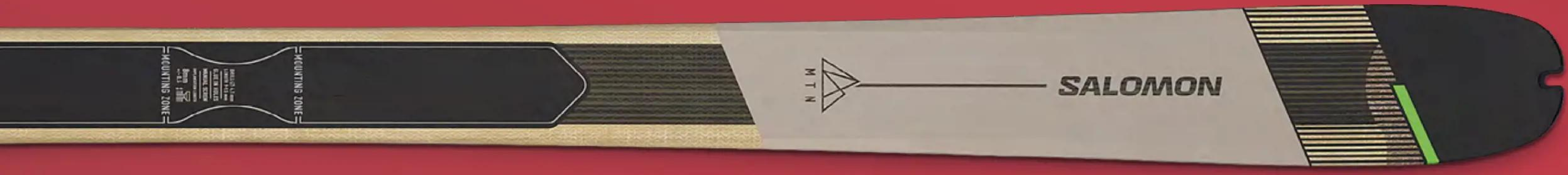
20 EDITORS' CHOICE 25

◢ "CONFIDENCE INSPIRING."

HEAD | CRUX 87 PRO

◢ "SURPRISINGLY DAMP."

SALOMON | MTN 86 CARBON


MOUNTING ZONE
MOUNTING ZONE
MTN
SALOMON

◢ "LIGHT, NIMBLE, SPORTY."

VOILÉ | ENDEAVOR

SPEED TOURING

HEAD

CRUX 87 PRO

"These lively, lightweight skis are just the ticket for a backcountry skier looking to spend most of their time in the backcountry and still finish the day in bounds without killing themselves." —Maria Riek

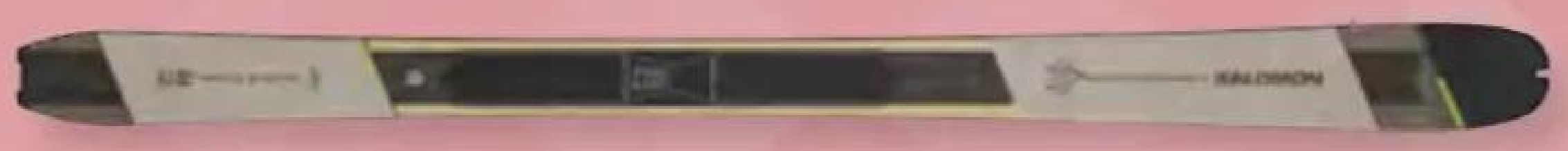
Every consequential line has its crux, and when Head set out to develop their first touring-specific line of skis, it was with just that in mind. The second narrowest ski in the line, the Crux 87 Pro embodies that intention, blending the line's lightweight technology with a slender waist. The result is, in the words of one seasoned Tahoe tester, "a perfect ski for a long walk in the high country."

Head does away with a traditional topsheet, opting instead for a clear polyester coat which leaves the triaxial carbon jacket, a staple of the Crux line, exposed. "Beautiful," said a Montanan of the visible crosshatched weave which gives the Crux 87 Pro strength and torsional rigidity at a light weight. Incorporated graphene and fiberglass—all sandwiching a precision-milled karuba core—make the ski damp. "Confidence inspiring, super stable at speed, quick edge to edge with no tip chatter and ripped through chop well," said a Wasatch-based charger.

A traditional sidecut with minimal tip and tail rocker and a low, long camber pocket make the Crux Pro 87 want to lay out long turns. "The ski can hold an edge," our Montanan praised; "serious trench town action," echoed a Vermonter. Described by said East Coaster as "the perfect Haute Route ski," the Crux 87 Pro thrived in corn, but still managed chop and chewed up groomers well. "Remarkably stable making long arcs at speed or quick swivel turns in the flats," a longtime Tahoe tester said, all while being so light she could barely feel them underfoot.

HEAD.COM | $800 | 2,440g (177)
126/87/108 | 149, 156, 163, 170, 177, 184

♀



SALOMON

MTN 86 CARBON

"Really fun skis for how light they are. They're able to cruise down windboard and corn and actually rip a turn." —Jocelyn Cuthbert

"If you're going to run uphill, you might as well enjoy the down," a Salt Lake City skintrack crusher (and our Gear Test Week sock-off champion) said. An East Coast race mom who prefers chairlifts found them great for "running up the mountain like a nimble mountain goat on the ascent and a roaring lion on the lightning fast, rock solid descents."

From the inside out, a lightweight karuba core is reinforced with new-this-year carbon in the ski's backbone to give the MTN 86 Carbon its remarkably sturdy on-snow feel. Paired with damping cork in the tip—offering lightweight, high level vibration absorption—this skinny ski battles chatter. "Surprisingly damp for their weight," one Vermont tester said. "Fast and firm has met its best friend," said another, who is all too familiar with such conditions.

A Bozeman-based, mullet-sporting tester called these skis "snappy and quick"—characteristics facilitated by a lightly rockered tip and tail and a cambered pocket underfoot. "Poppy, so fun," echoed an older, mullet-less Vermonter. One Tahoe ripper did find these skis "almost too soft," but for the most part she was impressed with their carvability, which is bolstered by a titanal binding insert, compared to other skis in the same category. This skiability sets the MTN 86 Carbon apart. In other words, "Built for skimo racers who want to still have a good time skiing down!" quipped the Wasatch baddass.

SALOMON.COM | $700 | 2,300g (172)
120/86/106 | 148, 156, 164, 172, 180

$ 24 ♀

VOILÉ

ENDEAVOR

"Imagine a ski that's your wingman both up and down the hill. Joyful and utterly fabulous." —Lindsay MacLeod

Cue the *Mission Impossible* soundtrack. According to one tester who does all her own stunts, the Voilé Endeavor is "a must have for those who want their adventures to feel like a starring role in their own action-packed movie."

Despite the narrow waist, the Endeavor clocks in as one of the heavier speed touring options. But heavy is a relative term in this category. "Light, nimble, sporty rando wanna be that you'd own and probably put a lot of days on," said a Vermonter. The poplar core is stiffened by triaxial fiberglass above and a carbon laminate below. Capped sidewalls are designed to balance edge hold and weight. The rocker profile—the same early tip rise and camber pocket as Voilé's freeride Charger Ace—surprised testers with playfulness. "Enough camber underfoot and a wood core give this plenty of pop out of the turn," summarized a tester who prefers a high edge angle. "The turn initiation is smooth and snappy," said a Montanan who gravitates toward skinny skis. "The stiffness gives confidence in whatever situation you find yourself in."

As for the Endeavor's purpose, it unsurprisingly scored best for hard snow performance, but it's no slouch in crud and some boot top pow. "Rails hard snow and corn, surfs powder to a point," said one tester. While a 19.5-meter turning radius suggests this would be for the GS minded, a California carver explained, "The minimal taper does not negatively impact the turning performance of this ski. It's incredibly well rounded for its weight."

VOILE.COM | $750 | 2,951g (178)
117/84/102 | 157, 164, 171, 178, 184

$ 24 ♀

HEAD
CRUX PRO

“This boot is definitely more focused on the skin, however, it exceeded my expectations with how well it skied.” —Eric Tiffany

Head has entered the touring-specific boot chat. Our testers response: high scores in fore/aft stiffness, walk mode, snow feel and ease of use. “No noodle ankle here!” exclaimed one Teton charger. “Responsive and solid,” added another tester who spent last season exploring B.C. on skis.

A true sum of its parts, the Crux Pro features a Pebax Rnew and recycled carbon fiber shell, creating a strong and stiff outer layer. Stiffness and skiability are heightened by a high-profile cuff with two buckles to secure it, plus a ratchet power strap. Head’s Lyt (proprietary term for their carbon-infused plastic) frame links the boot, cuff and walk mode lever, helping to solidify the multi-part hinge. “Extremely stiff off the top,” one Teton tester who seeks speed and airtime said. “I did not overflex this boot once.”

On the foot, a single buckle tightens a cable which crisscrosses from toe to ankle bone. Testers did find the 99-millimeter last was “slightly narrower than advertised,” but they acknowledged that with some molding and packing the fit could adapt. A standard spring-loaded lever on the heel unlocks the Crux Pro to reveal a claimed 55-degree range of motion for “a fantastic walk mode,” in the words of one free tourer from Tahoe. A tester from the Tetons who tours on a heavy setup did find the heel cuff rubbed on his Achilles, but he was still a fan, nicknaming the Crux Pro “the big boy’s skimo boot.”

HEAD.COM | $950 | 2,500g | FLEX: 130
LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 24.5-30.5

DYNAFIT
RIDGE PRO BOOT

“They walk comfier than your Converse All Stars, transition in 0.5 seconds and have the backbone of a Silverback Gorilla.” —Ian Halderman

Born from the tinkering hands and engineering brain of Eric Hjorleifson, Dynafit’s new Ridge Pro was built for committing lines. “This boot performed significantly better than my sarcastic mindset wanted it to,” confessed a hard charger from Teton Valley.

Three unique and independent mechanisms fasten this boot’s carbon fiber-loaded Grilamid shell and cuff: a Twistfit (a Boa alternative), a buckle and a power strap. “The cable knob lower and cuff lock/cuff cord wrap work well together,” one veteran Bozeman tester with a preference for long tours said. “Precise adjustment, fast transitions.” Plus, a floating tongue enables additional fit customization, benefitting varied insteps according to a Teton shredder.

When it’s time to walk, the Hoji Lock lever system, which scored a 6/7 for ease of use, disengages the cuff, as well as the power strap, “giving massive range of motion fore and aft,” raved a ski coach. Two others described said walk mode as “phenomenal.”

On snow, the Ridge is “light and stiff,” according to our Bozeman sport tourer. Though one tester compared the myriad mechanisms employed to lock the boot down to a Rubiks Cube, the efficacy was hard to argue with. “Built for all day sport touring,” said a Vermonter, adding, “For multiple ascents and fun descents in a day.”

DYNAFIT.COM | $900 | 2,500g
FLEX: 120 | LAST: 101mm | SIZES: 25-30.5

EDITORS' CHOICE 2025

LA SPORTIVA
KILO

“This boot is for long days in the backcountry where comfort takes priority, but once it was locked down, this boot was pushing wide, heavy skis through tricky terrain.” —Maggie McGee

Perspective is a powerful thing. Exactly how stiff is a 110-flex boot? Does your frame of reference change if that boot weighs an even 2,000 grams per pair? According to one tester, the 110-flex Kilo “surpassed my expectations.”

According to a featherweight-inclined tester, the Kilo is intended for a “touring mostly skier who wants comfort and a lightweight but stiff, powerful boot on the way down.” The claimed 70-degree range of motion is thanks to an open front design, covered by a waterproof gaiter. The shell blends Grilamid with carbon to find the balance point between weight, stiffness and progressive flex. “Stiff enough to push a bit,” wrote one tester. Like many other options in the speed touring category, the liner is light, averaging a 3/7. Testers noted that driving heavier skis can result in feeling the shell through the liner.

While fit is subjective, a theme emerged in many testers’ impressions. The minimal buckle system held well but the 100.5 last width tapered in a way that could make contact around the pinky toe. That being said, the Kilo still has the strength to be skied like a true ski boot and not like a featherweight randonée boot. As one tester remarked, “Just enough forward flex so you can really lean into it and drive your skis.”

LASPORTIVAUSA.COM | $899 | 2,000g
FLEX: 110 | LAST: 100.5mm | SIZES: 24-31.5

SALOMON
QST
116 · 184

WESTON
GRIZZLY

"These are for wide open powder fields when you've got more snow than you know what to do with," said a Wasatch shredder. Maximum float is provided by extended reverse camber and a paulownia core is reinforced with aluminum stringers and overlaid with triaxial carbon for torsional rigidity at a light weight. "Plenty of rocker to swing these around in the tight trees, but enough beef to match the chunder," said an East Coast tester. "The Grizzly should be mounted with a solid binding and be charged hard in the sidecountry on deep days," he added. Another tester warned that the Grizzly was dicey outside of its favored soft snow, saying, "For a full sidewall, it doesn't hold a good edge. This is for a powderhound with a more aggressive skiing style whose top priority is float."

**WESTONBACKCOUNTRY.COM | $699
4,200g (186) | 144/120/134 | 166, 176, 186**

$

SALOMON
QST X

If the wide waist wasn't a dead giveaway, our testers' unanimous verdict should clear up any questions: Salomon's new QST X is a heavy duty pow slayer. "These won't leave even one muffin unbuttered, nor one pillow unboofed," a Colorado charger said. A short camber pocket underfoot with a well-rockered tip and nearly equally rockered tail make the X playful and surfy, while damping cork and double sidewalls provide a "stable platform to ride on with power and speed," per a race coach. The X, like the EC-winning Echo, features a hybrid karuba/poplar core, helping it to shave nearly 700 grams off its next widest linemate, the QST Blank. Still, a tester joked, "Quadzilla should buy this ski," because it requires strength and skill to drive. But if powdery freeride days and AK spines are calling your name, as a seasoned trench layer recommends, "Bring these for the deep days that matter most."

**SALOMON.COM | $800 | 3,800g (184)
140/116/127 | 178, 184, 192**

VÖLKL
BLAZE 114

Unchanged since its Editors' Choice award last year (other than new graphics), the widest Blaze delivers uncompromised performance for those desiring a big-yet-maneuverable ski. "Designed for the pow yet smoothly navigates through the crud and hard pack," said a Vermonter. Like the Blaze 94 and 104, the 114 has a sustainably sourced beech/poplar core and a titanal plate underfoot for efficient power transfer. "It's rare that a wider ski can have the ability to ski so many conditions and the ability to deliver confidence to the pilot," remarked a Sierra powderhound. In fact, the 114 is surprisingly nimble. "I was able to make quick moves, and the ski would respond immediately," said a racer accustomed to narrower skis. Just don't plan an extended tour. "Best suited for sidecountry laps off big expert mountains," one sport tourer noted.

**VOLKL.COM | $750 | 3,890g (184)
154/114/136 | 166, 176, 184, 192**

$ 24

4FRNT
HOJI

"A non-traditional ski that forces creativity in style," said a veteran tester of legendary freeskier Eric Hjorleifson's namesake planks. Said tester is referring to 4FRNT's Multi Radius Rocker which is flat underfoot with four rocker radii gradually increasing towards the tip and tail. The profile aims to maximize playful, surfy turns without compromising edge hold. "I was expecting a mullet, business up front, party in the back. These are actually a crew cut—business, business, business," said a self-proclaimed skeptic of no camber skis who was impressed that his aggressive, forward style was rewarded. Testers called this ski damp, and it features an aspen/maple core inlaid with carbon fiber stringers. While some light skiers had trouble initiating turns on the Hoji, a freeride coach proclaimed the target audience by saying, "Western skiers who love to slash and butter will be in heaven on these big boards."

**4FRNT.COM | $809 | 3,980g (184)
128/112/120 | 170, 177, 184, 191**

BLAZE
114
Völkl

earn your **TURN**
rossignol.com
THIRTY YEARS
EDITORS' CHOICE
20 25
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
ROSSIGNOL

ESCAPER 105

From first tracks to last light, the new Escaper 105 redefines the weight versus performance equation. Ultra-easy going up. Powerful on the down. Playful float to enjoy those turns all the way home.

Photo : © MathisDecroux

ARMADA
LOCATOR 112

Fat and light might sound like an oxymoron, but the Locator 112's karuba core, carbon stringers and 1.7-millimeter sidewalls prove it's possible. "Impressively light for a ski that's so damp and adept in hard snow and variable conditions," said a rarely impressed tester. Damping is achieved with a rubber-sandwiched titanal binding plate. Liberal tip rocker offers plenty of float, and a long, low camber pocket and no tail rocker keeps the fattest Locator stable. "Surprisingly solid through crud," remarked a conservative skiing tester. A couple hard charging young men found a drawback, with one explaining, "Ultralight but lacks the power of other skis in the category." However, the Locator's versatility united plaudits and critics alike with a San Juan ripper saying, "Would be an ideal ski for most intermediate to advanced skiers looking for a lightweight, hard-charging, go-to ski."

ARMADASKIS.COM | $1,100 | 3,150g (180)
136/112/128 | 166, 173, 180, 187

J SKIS
THE SLACKER

"Skis for a park rat turned freeskier," said one of our testers, who dubbed the ski stiff and aggressive. A longtime tester familiar with their construction called this version his favorite iteration of The Slacker, adding, "Pre-cured carbon laminate construction boosts higher levels of performance than competitors." Even with weight reduction thanks to five full length carbon stringers and a snappy fiberglass layer woven in four directions, The Slacker's 100% aspen core left many testers questioning the uphill utility and responsiveness of these planks. "Super hard to initiate from the tip, better to lay back a bit and wiggle around," recommended an ex-racer. But when it came to wiggling powder turns, The Slacker's steep tip rocker, medium camber and slight tail rocker were a boon. "Camber profile makes it easy to rip through pow," declared one sendy shredder.

JSKIS.COM | $799 | 3,820g (182)
136/110/128 | 169, 176, 182, 188

ATOMIC
BENT 110

Underneath the Bent's flashy topsheet (painted by namesake Chris Benchetler himself), is a poplar core, which a freeride coach noted "allowed a nice underfoot flex." When the forward mounting point and generous rocker profile are considered, he added, "Much respect to the balanced and centered mounting point. A freeskier's dream." Other testers were impressed with the forgiving nature of the design, noting that anyone from intermediate skiers to hard chargers would thrive on this reliable stick. It also scored in the top tier for powder, crud, playfulness and responsiveness. But to achieve this, the Bent had to give something up, namely hard snow performance. Due to the short effective edge, one tester said, "Not super stable in long turns," and another suggested sizing up: "The 172 skis like a 140."

ATOMIC.COM | $900 | 3,500g (180)
133/110/124 | 164, 172, 180, 188

♀

NORDICA
UNLEASHED 108

Testers widely recommended the Unleased 108 be paired with an alpine capable binding such as the Shift or Kingpin for optimal results. "The ultimate sidecountry stick," lauded a tester familiar with out-of-bounds exploration. A titanal layer sits atop a poplar and beech core sandwiched by a carbon/fiberglass laminate for "a muscley, pow slashing, crud busting ski with just enough of a diet for short tours," per one 6'2" tester. A steeply upturned shovel and aggressive camber allows pivotability and edge hold. "I really felt like I was in the driver's seat at any speed and was blown away by how quickly and precisely it did anything I asked of it," said a tester who went looking for the speed limit. A freeride coach's conclusion: "An aggressive skier will be happier than a passive skier on these."

NORDICA.COM | $800 | 4,140g (180)
140.5/108/129.5 | 162, 168, 174, 180, 186, 191

PHOTOS BY ANNE WANGLER

4FRNT

INTRODUCING *THE NEVAR*

ERIC HJORLEIFSON'S FIRST NEW SKI DESIGN IN A DECADE AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT HAS CAMBER. BUILT TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SOFT AND FIRM SNOW, THIS SKI EXPANDS THE TERRAIN CAPABILITIES OF ERIC'S SIGNATURE SKIS. EQUIPPED WITH OUR GROUNDBREAKING 4-LOCK SKIN SYSTEM, THE NEVAR IS READY FOR EXPLORATION.

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TOUR
DYNASTAR
108
DYNASTAR

CARDIFF
GOAT PRO CARBON

"This ski is a bit of an enigma. It looks and skis heavy and damp—best paired with an ample boot—but it's actually fly weight and could companion a three-buckle equivalent," said a knowledgeable Vermonter. Light weight comes from the poplar and paulownia core overlaid with carbon stringers for added stiffness. "Not much sidecut to it or ability to load up or flex the ski so carving and popping wouldn't be this ski's main appeal," noted an astute freerider, who added, "Cambered profile but a short effective edge, which makes it easy to put sideways like a rockered ski." The Goat's soft rockered tip gets stiffer underfoot and toward the tail to increase maneuverability and security in steep terrain. "What it lacks in quick turn initiation it more than makes up for in slashability and edgehold in hard snow," summed up an OG tester.

**CARDIFFSNOW.COM | $1,149 | 3,156g (180)
129/108/121 | 174, 180, 186**

DYNASTAR
M-TOUR 108

A new topsheet is the only makeover for this year's M-Tour 108. The ski maintains its poplar and polyurethane core, layered in three directions to reduce glue usage, with directional fiberglass. Full sandwich sidewalls, long, high rise tip rocker and a 20-meter sidecut give the M-Tour 108 a specific niche according to testers. "This ski is for big turns on open faces," said one Front Range ripper. A lifelong East Coaster agreed, saying, "This is for luxurious powder days and someone just looking to go fast." Relatively flat tails and modest underfoot camber don't do much to increase maneuverability. "Seemed like a chore to get it to do anything," complained a middle-aged tester. A 22-year-old with puppy energy levels found the upside, noting, "This ski is for anyone turning the backcountry into a Freeride World Tour stop."

**DYNASTAR.COM | $900 | 3,000g (179)
135/107/125 | 170, 179, 187**

Charger
VOILE-USA

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
VOILÉ CHARGER

In the late aughts, when full reverse camber and waist widths pushing 120 millimeters were spreading like swine flu, Voilé was taking a different approach, dialing in a more moderate design with just the right blend of width, taper, rocker and camber. They launched the recipe in 2011 with the 112-millimeter-waisted Charger, a rocket-red Editors' Choice winner with upturned and tapered tip and tail that begged to smear soft-snow turns. Counter to the trending fully rockered powder skis of the time, however, the Charger's underfoot camber and aspen core added just enough pop to energize the beamy width and keep it stable at high speeds. The photo sample pair I unwrapped from the plastic my first year as an editor were the first rockered skis I owned, and the way they easily unhooked from turns and smoothly slid among Vermont hardwoods forever changed my skiing style from rigid carving to playful, poppy and creative. While Voilé has added numerous other Editors' Choice Awards to its mantle since 2011, including various lighter/stiffer/narrower iterations of the Charger, the original led the pack with a vanguard rocker recipe. Plus, at the time, they only cost $595.
—Tyler Cohen, Intern to Editorial Director (2009-2021)

WESTON
2025 GEAR GUIDE SELECT
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
WESTON
ZEAL

SLAY POW, NOT PEAKS

Let's not lie. Powder is more fun than cardio. Here at Weston we've taken a stance of designing backcountry skis that are playful, yet reliable, and make you stoked to Go Forth & Slay Pow. At 118mm underfoot, with a tighter than average turning radius, the Grizzly is going to let you slash pow and bash between tight trees with a ?*&! eating grin on your face.

Learn more at www.westonbackcountry.com

THE GRIZZLY

DYNAFIT

TIGARD 107 SKI

"If you're not driving this ski, it will drive you," warned a Vermont trench-layer. In the same vein, if you've got the drive to survive, "big lines and high speeds" are all yours, according to a Teton ripper familiar with the very kind. A paulownia core with beech and carbon stringers "make this ski stout and torsionally very stiff," a Tahoe free tourer found. Earning a 6/7 for dampness, thanks to the hybrid core, this ski with full sidewalls, tip/tail rocker and a long camber pocket also scored high in crud and pow. Built for "longer day tours," adds a Vermonter, who recommended these planks for "heavier, aggressive skiers." Though another argued they were "burly" on the uphill, he also said, "If you need reliability on the way down, look no further."

**DYNAFIT.COM | $850 | 3,220g (183)
133/107/121 | 171, 177, 183, 189**

DPS

CARBON PAGODA TOUR CFL 105

"Indecision paralysis got you down? Strap your pin binding of choice on these and don't look back," enthused a freerider of the new Carbon Pagoda Tour CFL 105. Sporting a paulownia core, this ski's most notable feature is a new laminate of carbon and flax fibers, intended to diminish torsional chatter, per DPS. This construction is paired with a 40/60 ratio of rocker to effective edge. "It sailed through thick, cut-up snow and felt smooth on harder surfaces," said an easy going tester. Echoed another, "Stable at higher speeds and edges well in firm snow." Not everyone was enamored. "Not playful at all," remarked a veteran tester who deemed it his least favorite DPS model. A teenage charger found that the rockered tip "would hook up on anything solid or crud like." But most were fans. As one put it, "An all-around great backcountry ski ready for any and all conditions."

**DPSSKIS.COM | $1,695 | 3,100g (179)
134/105/118 | 155, 163, 171, 179, 184**

♀

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

IMPULSE 104 TI

Titanal (hence the Ti in the name) is a high-tech aluminum alloy designed to be damp and stable. A single layer of the metal sits on top of a poplar core with beech stringers and prepreg (infused with dry glue) fiberglass. Per a freeride athlete, "This ski does everything exactly how I want it done. Super playful and springy." She noted the 18-meter turning radius was ideal for smaller turns, like East Coast bumps, but the full ABS sidewalls allowed the ski to rip GS turns down open western bowls. As for the long camber pocket and rockered tip and tail, a Montanan explained, "Handles crud well, even with very forward contact points and minimal taper." Consensus was these are best for intermediate and advanced skiers but there was debate on the weight class. Some testers were happy to carry the grams on long walks; others pigeonholed them for sled-access and sidecountry.

**BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM
$850 | 3,760g (179) | 136/104/123
158, 165, 172, 179, 186**

♀

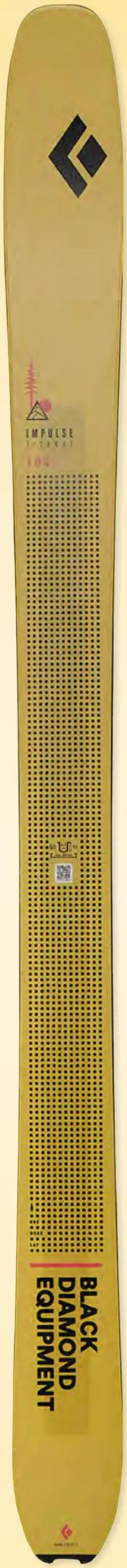
LINE

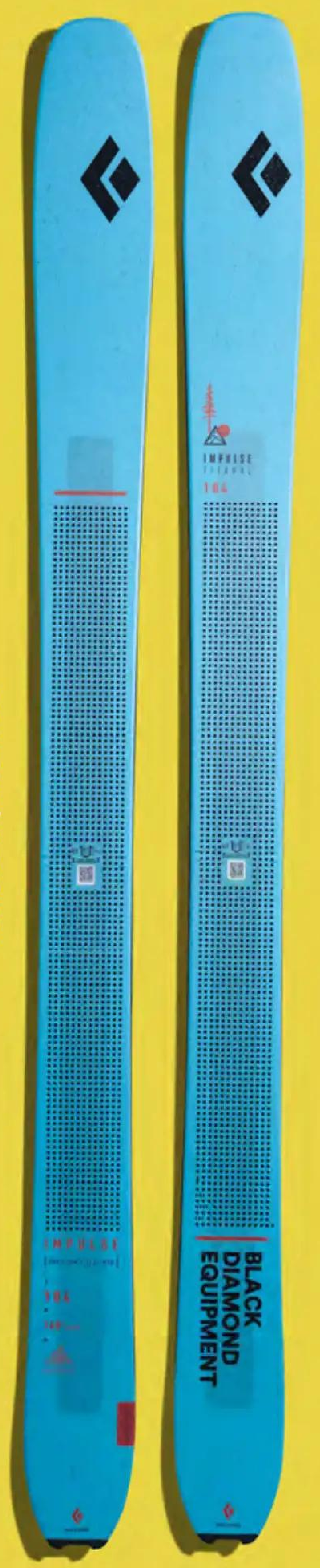
VISION 104

"A great crossover ski for someone looking to ride resort and backcountry," said a Colorado-based tester. All-rounder ability can be attributed to Line's classic THC technology—damping layers of fiberglass, aramid and carbon fiber. The damping tech is balanced by a lightweight paulownia core, while aspen adds support for the descent. This year's Vision 104 is also the first time the brand has added the thick, durable sidewalls used in their freeride line to their touring skis. One tester commented, "The stiff and stable construction makes for a reliable ski for someone getting sendy in the backcountry." Several of our lighter testers had to drive the more cambered profile a bit harder to get good results: "No checking out or wandering to lala land," one said, but another summarized, "Perfect for a freeride skier in need of a one ski quiver."

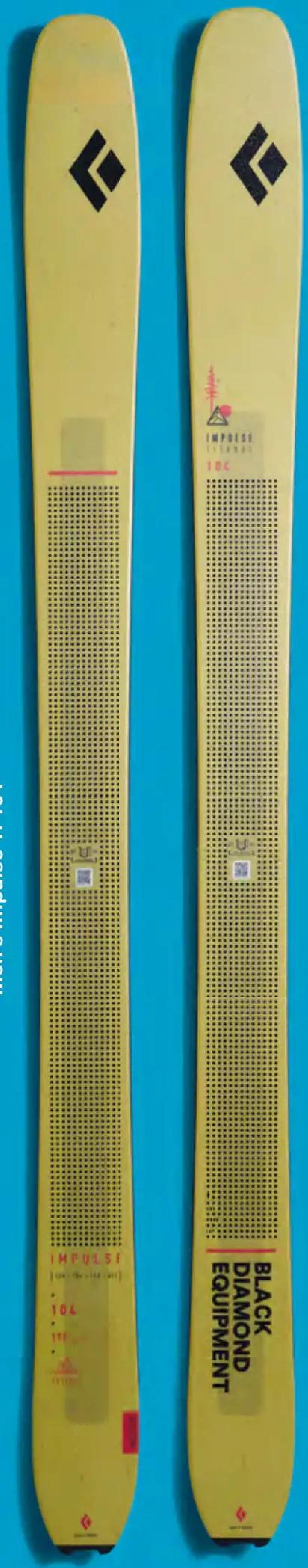
**LINESKIS.COM | $800 | 3,620g (185)
132/104/123 | 158, 165, 171, 178, 185**

♀




IMPULSE
TITANAL
104
BLACK
DIAMOND
EQUIPMENT

Women's Impulse Ti 104


IMPULSE
TITANAL
104
BLACK
DIAMOND
EQUIPMENT

Men's Impulse Ti 104

IMPULSE TI 104

Redesigned and redefined, our new Impulse Ti skis feature an added Titanal sheet for premium power transmission, dampness, and stability to hold fast while charging in the backcountry.

Black Diamond®

ZAG
CHAMONIX
SLAP 104 Lite
SLAP 104

ZAG
SLAP 104 LITE

“An extremely playful and light all mountain touring twin great for those who aren’t in a hurry on the descent and want to jump off everything in sight,” described a Teton powderhound. The twin tips are paired with moderate camber underfoot and a half cap ABS sidewall, meant to contribute to the ski’s playful feel. “The wood core, multi-axial fiberglass and added linen fiber made for a light yet damp and powerful ski,” praised one of our OG testers. Said core is composed of alternating strips of ultralight paulownia with heavier poplar underfoot. “A light touring ski with no surprises,” said a Vermonter, who added “matching with a light AT boot would make a great mix to tour in the backcountry.” Added another, “Light and floaty in the powder but they had a floppy tip.” The conclusion from a poppy skier: “Really surprising stability through rough crud but playful and fun to flick around in the air.”

US.ZAGSKIS.COM | $899 | 3,240g (176)
136/104/125.2 | 170, 176, 182, 188

CARDIFF
CRANE

“Built for carving, schlarving, slicing, dicing—this ski is quite enticing,” said a Colorado freeride skier. With a forgiving flex, 65% camber and twin-ish shape, our testers felt that the Crane was more elegant than aggressive. “Feels quite versatile but may not be best for big mountain terrain where one might want longer, more drawn out turns,” one tester said. Despite that, a Utahn described it to be “a really smooth, damp ski.” A light but stiff poplar/paulownia core is overlaid with full-length carbon stringers, leading one tester to recommend these planks to “those who count grams they carry up the skintrack and still want to enjoy the turns they earned.” A Wasatch dawn patroller backed up that sentiment, saying, “This ski is for light, long tours—getting way out there and wanting to be prepared for when powder turns to crud, chop or windboard.”

CARDIFFSNOW.COM | $850 | 3,178g (172)
123/104/120 | 166, 172, 178

LINE
VISION 96

“For someone who splits time between resort and walking, but doesn’t go on big epics,” said a Wasatch dawn patroller. Like the Vision 104, these combine damping THC tech with an aspen/paulownia core and a vertical sidewall. “Shockingly damp for how playful it was,” praised a Vermont freeskier. “Soft tip and stiff tail with a bit of rocker helps the ski hold well and perform in variable conditions,” added another. Free touring testers found the turn initiation to be precise and intuitive. “Made dodging tight aspens fun and easy,” praised one. On the flip side, a tester with a laidback, upright stance found “it has trouble initiating.” He recommended a heavier boot and binding to compensate. As his friend concluded, “This ski wants to be driven hard—you ride it hard, or it will ride you.”

LINESKIS.COM | $750 | 3,360g (184)
131/96/120 | 154, 160, 166, 172, 178, 184

$

VÖLKL
BLAZE 94

If you crave an energetic ski that can charge in pow, plow through crud and Ginsu a turn, meet your new ride. “So damp, yet so responsive,” marveled a hard-charging tester. The revamped Blaze 94 now has the same 4 Radius Drive construction—with four turn radii in different parts of the ski—and sustainable wood core as its sibling, the Blaze 104. Yet the 94’s narrower profile adds versatility. “Will devour ripped-up powder, bumps, trees with nimble ease,” a Vermont-based freeski coach declared. And this ski loves to hold an edge: “Runs hardpack almost like a slalom race ski,” said an ex-racer. The freeski coach noted that the tip and tail’s thermoplastic polyurethane, shock-absorbing inserts provide “amazing terrain absorption, with a springy release when unweighting.” “One of my all-time favorite skis I’ve tested,” raved a female ripper.

VOLKL.COM | $700 | 3,380g (179)
133/94/118 | 151, 158, 165, 172, 179, 186

$ ♀

BLAZE 94
Völkl

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CRUX 99 PRO SKI + ALMONTE 12 PT BINDING

CRUX PRO BOOT + CRUX TOURING SKIN

GRAPHENE

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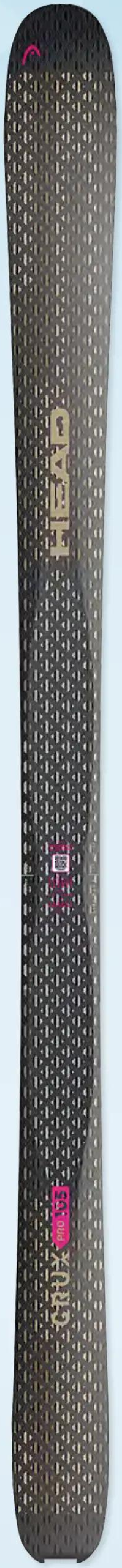
BLIZZARD
105
ZERO G



BLIZZARD
ZERO G 105

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That might be the mantra of the Zero G's legacy, which testers have been lauding as a versatile, sable option for a decade. The widest variation returns unchanged this year, utilizing a mix of beech and poplar with ISO foam stringers in the core, which is softer in the tip and tail and stiffer underfoot. Between the wood and a layer of fiberglass, a carbon chassis runs tip to tail. Two more pieces of carbon under the topsheet work with a partial sandwich sidewall and a long, low camber pocket in what one race dad calls "a light, snappy, all mountain GS ski with a feather-weight construction." According to a Montana ski patroller, "These are for someone who skis a variety of conditions and terrain and needs a tool to manage it all."

**BLIZZARD-TECNICA.COM | $899
3,080g (180) | 133/105/119
164, 172, 180, 188**

HEAD
CRUX 105 PRO

Sporting a crosshatched carbon sweater, Head's Crux 105 Pro, is for "someone looking to drop weight but not sacrifice fun," according to one Bozeman-based charger. Though 6 millimeters wider than its next closest sibling, the Pro 99, the 105 shares the construction of the rest of the Crux line. A precision milled karuba core, shaped to eliminate weight, is sandwiched by damping fiberglass and carbon incorporated with graphene. "The triaxial carbon jacket is impressively rigid for a ski of this construction," one longtime Tahoe tester found. "Snappy and quick," said another from Bozeman, "feels more nimble than its 105 waist." Tip and tail rocker, minimal camber and a 17.7-meter turning radius make the Crux 105 Pro more traditionally responsive in turns. Meanwhile, the wide shovel helped the ski score a 5/7 for pow performance. Built for "touring and deeper, long days," added a tester who chases said conditions.

**HEAD.COM | $950 | 2,880g (184)
133/105/122 | 170, 177, 184**

ARMADA
LOCATOR 104

"Loves to go on long walks—performs well with a lightweight binding," said a Teton ripper. "There might be a little bit of magic sprinkled into the construction of the Locators." Armada's recipe features a karuba core and carbon stringers, which left several testers questioning if they even had skis on for the ascent. On the descent, early rise tip rocker provided adequate float and long, low camber, minimal tail rocker and hybrid sidewalls (full underfoot and capped in the tip and tail) added some bite on hard snow. Plenty of aggressive skiers still hit a speed limit on the descent, with one calling it "under-gunned for more rambunctious terrain." On the upside, lightweight testers pointed to the Locator's approach-ability, with one observant guide saying, "This would be a dope bc setup for an intermediate skier."

**ARMADASKIS.COM | $1,025 | 2,900g (178)
131/104/122 | 162, 170, 178, 186**

♀

ATOMIC
BACKLAND 101 W

"Flowy, fun and functional," said our design editor. "It may not be the shiniest toy on the market, but there's a lot to discover behind its more stoic exterior." Atomic reduced the amount of fiberglass from previous Backland iterations and added more poplar and karuba to the core, just like the EC-winning Backland 109. The siblings share a HRZN Tech Tip and the Dura Cap semi-capped sidewalls. Where they differ is in the profile: The narrower waisted women's model has more camber underfoot and less rocker, which testers noted made them more forgiving and agile in variable snow. "Doesn't require an expert skier," explained a tester who splits time between Vermont and B.C. "They carved nicely and stayed loyal underfoot." A Wasatch ripper suggests them for "intermediate skiers who want versatile skis but can drive a stiffer ski."

**ATOMIC.COM | $900 | 2,520g (164)
127/101/117.5 | 156, 164, 172**

♀

ARMADA
LOCATOR

ATOMIC
BACKLAND 101

ZERO G

ZERO G TOUR SERIES

The *weight* is over.

PC: Guy Fattal

THIRTY YEARS
EDITORS' CHOICE
BACKCOUNTRY
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PC: Chloe Jimenez

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DYNASTAR
TOUR
100

FACTION
183
2
MINI

DYNASTAR
M-TOUR 100

"If buying multiple skis for your local skinner sounds like getting your back waxed and more expensive to boot, grab the M-Tour 100 and forget about it," said an evidently hairy tester. The M-Tour's construction ain't fancy, but that might be the secret to its versatility. A full sandwich sidewall is paired with a tri-directional poplar and polyurethane core layered around damping fiberglass. Dynastar claims the layering pattern reduces glue usage and therefore weight and environmental impact, but our testers were more focused on on snow performance. In powder, "the directional rocker allows it to float well above its waist width," said our hairy tester. "Handles well in chop and firmer snow," said another, who skied these on a variable day. Across conditions, testers noted easy initiation with one carving maestro toting these as "kinda a mom ski in the very best way."

DYNASTAR.COM | $800 | 2,700g (178)
134/100/124 | 162, 170, 178, 186

FACTION
LA MACHINE 2 MINI

"I see these as a young person's ski who likes to build booters or drop off features," summed up a not-so-young tester. While Faction may be best known in the park world, La Machine 2 Mini earns backcountry chops with a lightweight construction: two full length layers of carbon sandwich a paulownia core paired with a partially capped sidewall. Freestyle pedigree comes with underfoot camber, traditional tip and tail rocker and Elliptical Sidecut (straighter sidecut underfoot with a shorter radius at the tip and tail). The result? "This ski is tightloose—you can ski it tight and clean or push on the carbon and camber and smear it all over the place," said a Teton-based powder-hound. Or as a Front Range ripper put it, "What the ski lacks in immediate responsiveness it makes up for with stability, predictability and versatility."

FACTIONSKIS.COM | $899 | 2,780g (177)
124/99/116 | 157, 164, 171, 177, 183

♀

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
DPS WAILER TOUR1

I tested the DPS Wailers Tour1 out for the first time in 2016, before I purchased them. I was really impressed with how well they handled on the downhill for how light they were. When people pick them up, they say, "Oh my god, your skis are so light." But the Wailers really handled the May conditions—anything from powder to corn to just chopped up melting chunder type stuff—which was a result of the cap construction, a balsa core and carbon fiber. So that's why I ended up buying them. And I still use them on big powder days. They've been with me on a ton of hut trips. They get a little bit chattery on hardpack, but it's nothing that I mind so much that I'm not going to use them. At the time they were definitely among the lightest for a ski of that width. I mean, there are now those real skimo type things that are going to be lighter but, the Wailers are super light. DPS changed the construction in 2019, using fiberglass, carbon and bamboo in the Hybrid model. But, I still wish they would bring the original Wailers back. *—As told by Cindy Hirschfeld, Staff Writer and Gear Tester, 1999-Present*

FISCHER

GEAR GUIDE SELECT
20 25
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
THIRTY YEARS
EDITORS' CHOICE
20 25
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
TRANSALP PRO 92
TRANSALP 98
TRANSALP CTI 105
TRANSALP PRO 86
TRANSALP CTI 86

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SKIING IS NOT A LIFESTYLE. IT'S LIFE.

FISCHERSPORTS.COM

HEAD
CRUX
PRO 99

ROSSIGNOL
ESC
APER
97

HEAD

CRUX 99 PRO

Praised by a seasoned Montana-based tester as "one of the most damp and stable light skis," the Head Crux 99 Pro broke into the backcountry-specific scene with force. "A featherweight for their size but pack a big punch!" quipped a patroller. Loading that punch is a lightweight karuba core sandwiched by damping fiberglass, all of which is topped with a strengthening and torsionally rigid triaxial carbon jacket, and damped with graphene. Topped with clear polyester, the ski's construction is left visible. It was a hit with testers: "Love that see-through carbon—so sexy," one longtime tester lauded. A traditional alpine profile—minimal tip-tail rocker and a long, low camber pocket—make the Crux "impressively consistent on edge," one Tahoe ripper found. Recommended by testers for competent skiers, a sport tourer said, "Could work as an 80/20 b.c./resort single ski setup."

HEAD.COM | $900 | 2,770g (184)
132/99/117 | 163, 170, 177, 184

ROSSIGNOL

ESCAPER 97 NANO

"A lightweight all-day ski with enough snap to be confident in most conditions," said a heavyweight tester about the Escaper 97 Nano, a 2024 Editors' Choice winner. Returning unchanged, this ski features a light poplar core, a layer of nano basalt that adds elasticity and shock absorption, per Rossignol and a titanal layer underfoot. These materials "help the Escaper punch above its weight in rough conditions," said a Tahoe-based tourer. The brand's swing-weight saving Aero Profile, plenty of tip rocker, long camber and a rockered tail kept this tester impressed on the descents. As a hard charger summarized, "Anyone could add this to their quiver as a daily driver and be happy for years, especially on the skintrack when you beat all your friends up and have more fun than them on the way down."

ROSSIGNOL.COM | $750 | 2,700g (177)
126/97/116 | 161, 169, 177, 185

$ 24

SALOMON

MTN 96 CARBON

"The epitome of an all-mountain ski," per a Vermont freeskier, the Salomon MTN 96 earned high marks as a playful, responsive, damp ski that punched above its weight class. "Consistent enough to be a daily driver at the resort and light enough to be a dedicated touring setup," added a Tahoe-based tester. Constructed with a karuba core sandwiched by layers of woven fiberglass, this ski was recommended by said Tahoean, for "anyone looking for a combination of skiing capability and a tour friendly weight." Damping cork and subtle tip and tail rocker pair with a cambered pocket underfoot to "make a quick turning and poppy combination," per the same Tahoe tester. "Reliable and surprisingly playful," remarked another from the Tetons. Earning a 6/7 for its versatility, the MTN 96 "could almost be a backcountry quiver killer," said a sport tourer, "but it's a little narrow for surfing pow."

SALOMON.COM | $800 | 2,780g (174)
129/96/115 | 166, 174, 182, 188

ARMADA

LOCATOR 96

Biologists often classify species into two categories: specialist or generalist. Testers decided the Locator 96 was the latter, or as one metaphorical tester said, "A good dog, well trained and loyal. No tricks, comes when called and always excited to see you." These puppies keep things light with a snappy karuba core reinforced by 45-degree carbon stringers. A rubber sandwiched Titanal binding plate damps some chatter. Plenty of tip rocker combined with long, low camber make for quick, easy turning, per our testers. One ripping Teton local pointed out the negative side of being overly friendly, saying "Aggressive skiers might overski the 96 to the point of it not being fun." Two petite testers found a potential niche. "Ideal for extended journeys and indulging in creamy, soft snow," said one. The other added, "Any beginner to intermediate would be thrilled to ski this ski."

ARMADASKIS.COM | $975 | 2,700g (178)
127/96/117 | 157, 164, 171, 178, 185

♀

SALOMON
MTN
MOUNTING ZONE
L174
96
CAR
BON

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VOILÉ
171
VECTOR ACE

Völkl
96
Völkl
RISE Beyond

VOILÉ

VECTOR ACE

The new Vector Ace is an Ozempic-addicted version of the two-time EC winning Charger Ace. It carries the same light paulownia core wrapped in stiff carbon, the same half-capped sidewalls and the same maple veneer mounting plate. Even the rocker/camber profile is the same (early tip rise, long camber pocket, flat tail), but where the Charger Ace is a powder pusher, the skinny waisted Vector Ace prefers long walks and wiggling dad turns. “These skis were made for walking,” said a tester who suggested pairing them with a lightweight boot and binding. He added, “Softer than other lightweight skis yet still damp.” “Gets a little bucked in extra firm conditions but handled well on hardpack,” declared a former ski racer. “An intuitive ski that likes to surf, drives easy and is built for a good time.”

**VOILE.COM | $995 | 2,680g (177)
130/96/114 | 157, 164, 171, 177, 184**

♀

VÖLKL

RISE BEYOND 96

Perennially earning tester praise since its introduction four years ago, the widest ski in Völkl’s touring line shines “where lightness matters, as does an easy turn on the way down,” as a tester who prefers heavier sticks put it. “The multilayer wood core and carbon tip construction create a lightweight but stable platform,” reported an astute tester, referring to the ski’s paulownia/beech core and the lightly rockered tip’s carbon insert. “Softer and more snow-filled terrain will elevate this ski’s performance,” said a Vermont freeskier; indeed, one Front Range ripper found the ski chattery in variable conditions, while a Sierra shredder noted, “The ski had a tough time with different layers from the wind.” Testers agreed this ski wasn’t for the hardest of chargers, but as one Tahoean summed up, “Anyone looking for a playful but consistently strong ski should enjoy the Rise Beyond 96.”

**VOLKL.COM | $750 | 2,524g (170)
138/96/119 | 156, 163, 170, 177, 184**

$

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

HELIO CARBON 95

“ChatGPT needs to use this as the template on how to construct the ultimate backcountry ski,” a techy tester quipped. He questioned how something so light could perform in anything from crud to hardpack to pow. The answer is under the hood, where a paulownia core is inlaid with carbon stringers and adhered to a prepreg carbon sheet. By infusing the carbon with glue before assembling the ski, the Helio Carbon 95 is lighter, damper and stiffer than the competition, per Black Diamond. Finishing touches include a full ABS sidewall, a titanal mounting plate and a rockered tip and low-rise tail. “For someone looking for a ski that can hold up to whatever your long walk brings you,” concluded a Teton-based tester. Testers recommend these for advanced skiers, with one saying, “Punishes bad form but rewards the worthy.”

**BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM
$880 | 2,800g (176) | 124/95/113
155, 162, 169, 176, 183**

24 ♀

DYNAFIT

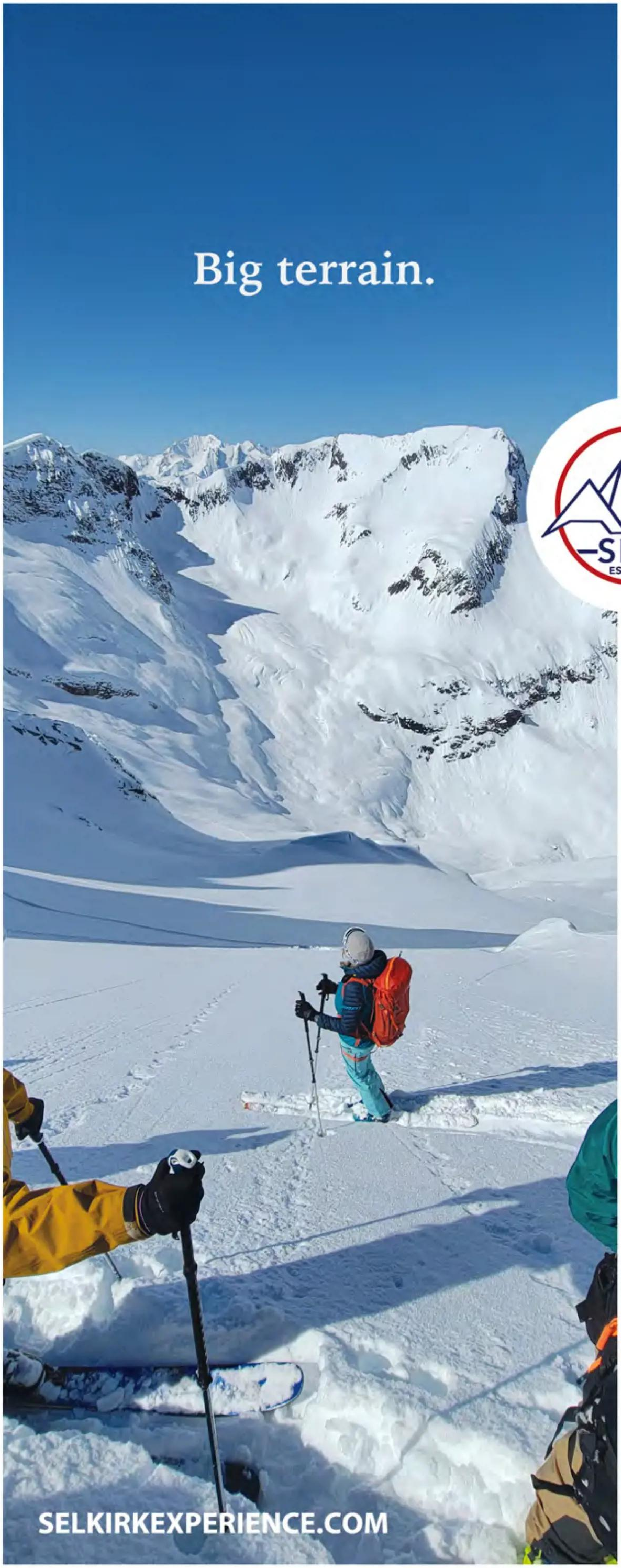
RIDGE SKIS 95

From ridge to runout, these planks want to do it all. Versatile and playful, per testers’ high ratings, Dynafit’s new Ridge 95 sports a paulownia core and a Titanal Boost (an H frame of titanal underfoot). “A solid, dependable platform,” said a longtime tester and former patroller. “Torsionally rigid. Damp,” he added. A full sidewall, directional flex and a long camber pocket with gradual rocker in the tip and tail lends to a 17-meter turning radius with “tenacious edge transition grip,” according to a Wasatch-based tester. Said tester also found the Ridge 95 to be responsive and high-performing in crud and hard-snow, giving the ski a 5/7 rating in both. Toss on some “three-buckle boots,” he recommended and seek out “spring corn.”

**DYNAFIT.COM | $800 | 2,660g (176)
129/95/116 | 160, 168, 176, 184**

BLACK
DIAMOND
EQUIPMENT

DYNAFIT
RIDGE
95
DYNAFIT



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Durrand Glacier, Revelstoke BC

Our idea of a shallow snowpack? 8 feet.

The snow keeps falling year after year. No down days here. As we're headed into our 39th season of operation, here's a breakdown of the tried and tested dream holiday (for some): 7 days of ski touring, hut to hut skiing in three chalets, sublime 3000+ vertical ft tree runs, world renowned alpine playground, and a home base lodge with all the bells and whistles one could possibly want out in the heart of the middle of nowhere.

Fly in. Ski hard. Eat well. Feel accomplished. Repeat. Since 1985.

BLIZZARD
95
ZERO G

HEAD
CRUX
PRO 93

BLIZZARD

ZERO G 95

Unlike the wider 105, the Zero G 95 cuts weight by using a pure paulownia core. Otherwise, the two share the same tech: a carbon chassis between wood and fiberglass, more carbon reinforcements over the titanal mounting plate, a partial sandwich sidewall and a generous camber pocket with subtle tip and tail rise. Despite being billed as a medium flex underfoot with a soft tip and tail, testers had no problem driving this ski. “Charging. Hot damn, this is it,” said a Crested Butte skid, who gave them a near-perfect score for versatility, playfulness and dampness. “Well balanced camber/rocker profile that lets ’em rip groomers, crud, pow, trees.” While these were favored by smaller skiers, one 6-foot ripper called them a “very responsive ski that thrives in steep terrain where the snow is forgiving. Very easy to throw around.”

BLIZZARD-TECNICA.COM | $799
2,520g (178) | 127/95/111
157, 164, 171, 178, 185

♀

HEAD

CRUX 93 PRO

With its topless tech, the Crux line could be equally as at home on a French beach as it is on committing lines in its birthplace Austrian Alps. Scoring a 5/7 in versatility, the Crux 93 Pro “sliced and diced everything in its path,” said one skintrack crusher. Visually and structurally defined by the strengthening triaxial carbon jacket which sits just beneath a layer of clear polyester, this ski is “surprisingly powerful for its light weight,” one longtime tester said. Meanwhile, a karuba core, sandwiched by incorporated graphene and fiberglass makes the ski damp. “Remarkably stable and easy to initiate,” praised a longtime tester from Tahoe. “The sweet spot of all the Head Crux skis,” said his Bozeman counterpart. “More uphill focused but a great touring ski for almost any condition.” Another warned, “Just stay out of deep snow.”

HEAD.COM | $850 | 2,560g (177)
130/93/113 | 163, 170, 177, 184

SCOTT

EXPLORAIR 92 LT

“Great for someone who wants a light touring ski that is stable and dependable on the way down,” said a freeride athlete about the new Explorair 92 LT, the lightest model in Scott’s touring line. “An all-around top-notch performer—playful and versatile yet reliable and responsive,” agreed a fan of mellow arcs, who added that the ski is “very responsive in all size turns.” A paulownia core lightens the ski while fiberglass and carbon stringers give torsional rigidity. The hybrid cap sidewall construction makes the Explorair 92 LT versatile in all terrain, says Scott. One tester who said she likes to rip long, fast turns noted, “This ski had a perfect dampness-to-weight ratio for me.” Another similar skier found the ski strong and stable on soft snow but commented that it “gets bucked around in firmer, icy crud.”

SCOTT-SPORTS.COM | $750
2,300g (172) | 124/92/113
154, 163, 172, 181

$

FISCHER

TRANSALP 92 PRO CTI

What is this ski best for? Per one collegiate ski racer, “Anything.” She pinpointed turn initiation and edge hold as the two standouts, while an East Coast race mom said, “Crafted with precision for the challenging trio of steep, fast and firm conditions.” Unsurprising for a 92-underfoot, but a feat for a 2,760-gram pair. Fischer claims its Air Tec—a special milling pattern in the paulownia core—reduces weight by 25% while maintaining a smooth flex and torsional stability. Carbon stringers, an hourglass piece of titanal under-foot and ABS sidewalls add stiffness. Fischer also incorporated the large turning radius and rocker profile from their freeride Ranger series, but, per testers, the tip rise wasn’t enough to bust crud. According to one tester, “The edge will hold you in place on those tight chutes, and the weight will make you smile on the ascent.”

FISCHERSPORTS.COM | $900
2,760g (169) | 123/92/109 | 162, 169, 176, 183

FISCHER
A
176
TRANSALP
PRO
92

HELLYHANSEN.COM

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TEAM LEADERS
SAFETY ENFORCERS
SNOWSTORM WARRIORS
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LIZZY SEIBERT, VAIL MOUNTAIN SKI PATROL

WNDR ALPINE
NOCTURNE 88

"Built for long walks paired with a 120-flex slipper or 130-flex touring boot," said one hard-charger after a walk and some cliff drops. "If skimo skis don't excite you, but steep scary couloirs delight you, you will love this ski." The 88-millimeter waist pairs with a similar build to WNDR's other models: an algal core and vertical sidewalls, foam stringers, the SpiralMade binding plate (a 3-millimeter piece of repurposed waste bonded with resin). But it only comes in the cambered option. The long, low pocket turns to gradual tip rise and moderate tail rise, and the ski slowly softens from tip to tail. "Beautiful, stable, never gets deflected," said a small tester. His larger counterpart added, "Like a skinny person with a big butt, if you're willing to push the weight, you will be delighted."

**WNDR-ALPINE.COM | $899 | 3,100g (178)
117/88/108 | 166, 172, 178, 184**

ROSSIGNOL
ESCAPER 88 NANO

"A do-it-all ski for everything but the deepest days in the backcountry," said a carving expert of the new Escaper 88 Nano, which replaces the previous 87 and 80 models as the narrowest of Rossignol's touring skis. A paulownia core and carbon stringers, combined with a layer of nano basalt and nano titanal underfoot, make the ski light without sacrificing performance. "Damp and featherweight without the dreaded carbon chatter," said one jib happy tester. Added a lightning-fast skier, "The sidewall construction has a sweet blend of deep, even flex and fun rebound." Like the other Escaper skis, the 88 Nano has an Aero Profile, which Rossignol designed to enhance turnability. As a freeride tester summed up, the Escaper 88 Nano suits "distance tourers, spandex wearers and spring couloir skiers who want a fun ski, not just a tool."

**ROSSIGNOL.COM | $700 | 2,700g (176)
121/88/111 | 156, 166, 176, 182**

$ ♀

ATOMIC
BACKLAND 86 UL

"For a full carbon ski, it holds up to a playful style and variable snow conditions," said a tester who used these for spring volcano missions. The balance comes from a marriage of a weight saving core and functional shaping found in wider Backlands. A carbon backbone and sheet of carbon fiberglass stiffen the poplar/karuba core. While the hull-shaped and slightly rockered HRZN Tech Tip are designed to bust crud and add some float, the half-capped sidewalls and flat tail add stability. "Out of every lightweight ski that I've used, these have the lowest tendency to run away if I get in the backseat," explained our tester, who prefers an upright stance. He concluded, "Despite the actual weight, they ski slightly heavier and have a lot more control. You can play around on the ski, but it's definitely a lightweight ski still."

**ATOMIC.COM | $900 | 1,940g (172)
120/85.5/108 | 157, 165, 172, 179**

♀

BLACKCROWS
MENTIS FREEBIRD

A catchphrase printed on the Mentis' sidewall reads, "yesterday i ate a whole pizza." A former collegiate Nordic racer doubted even deep dish would stop these from flying uphill, joking, "These might be lighter than my XC race skis." The light paulownia core is supplemented by plenty of carbon—stringers and a full sheet run tip to tail—which add stiffness without extra weight. Blackcrows insists the Mentis is for more than running uphill though, with a full ABS sidewall transitioning to a capped construction at either end for stability and tip rocker adding pivotability. Lightweight testers were able to enjoy the descent, with a 130-pound tester saying, "It was responsive and remarkably fun for its narrow girth." A Vermonter who prefers mellower terrain added a caveat, saying, "Effortlessly glides through creamy powder and maintains solid edge grip. However, this ski struggles in other terrain."

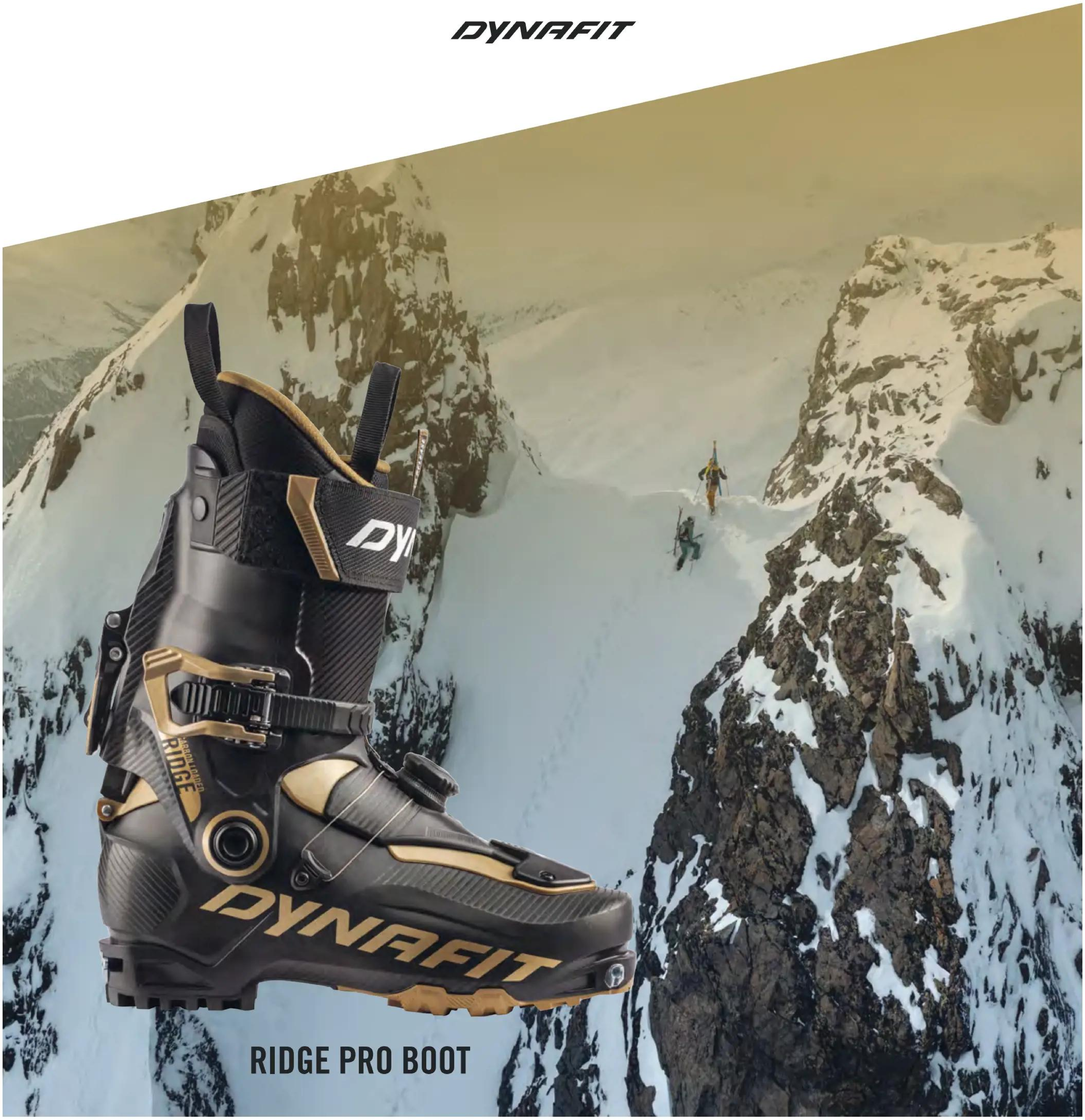
**BLACK-CROWS.COM | $1,000
2,000g (171) | 110/80/100 | 157, 164, 171, 178**

♀

ATOMIC
BACKLAND
86UL
172 CM

black crows
blackcrows
mentis
freebird
171.0
8.0
19

DYNAFIT


DYNAFIT
RIDGE
RIDGE PRO BOOT

READY TO TAKE OFF

RIDGE SYSTEM

THIRTY YEARS
20 EDITORS' CHOICE 25
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE

BLIZZARD
ZERO G LT80

The smallest sibling of the Zero G family combines Austrian race performance and uberlight skimo tech. “Holds its edge on firm snow, even on refrozen, old tracks,” noted a Montanan with a speed touring quiver. While the edge hold can be attributed to partial sandwich sidewalls and a lightened version of Blizzard’s Carbon 3.0 Drive (a unilateral strip of carbon running tip to tail), the forgiving tip comes from the TrueBlend wood core. Lightweight paulownia is set with stiffening poplar stringers, which are set back to start just in front of the carbon mounting plate and run most of the way down the tail. The result is a soft tip and stiff tail. The Montanan concluded, “While the Zero G LT80 isn’t heavy, many skis in this width are lighter, but none as stable.”

BLIZZARD-TECNICA.COM | $799 | 2,000g (171) | 108/80/94 | 150, 157, 164, 171, 178

♀

DYNAFIT
DNA SKI

Likened to a “hungry cheetah prowling for a rapid ascent up the slopes,” by one Vermonter, Dynafit’s DNA ski is a skintrack predator. Featherweight with just a 64-millimeter waist, these slender planks are meant to take you up everything fast. With a paulownia core and Dynafit’s race carbon (carbon fibers running in the same direction), stiff, lightweight speed is literally in this ski’s genetic makeup. The tradeoff for their uphill performance, however, is a lack of versatility. The DNA scored highest on hard snow, but struggled in crud and, unsurprisingly, pow. “The skis were windshield-wipering down perfect packed powder,” said a veteran tester. If Type 2 fun and side-slipping couloirs are for you, then so are the DNA skis. Said another Vermonter, “Skimo athletes would find a lot of joy in these.”

DYNAFIT.COM | $950 | 1,380g (162) | 98/64/79 | 153, 162

♀

VOILÉ
SR61

Unsurprisingly, these skimo sticks can walk the walk, but they can also talk the talk. “Surprisingly great edge hold. Surprised me on ability to carve,” said one tester who initially thought these were only for “running uphill in the tightest outfit possible.” The SR61 has the narrowest waist we tested and what looks like a capped sidewall. But closer examination shows a steep bevel angle (90 degrees) which makes it ride similar to a vertical sidewall. The paulownia core is sandwiched between carbon fiber and glass fiber, all of which is topped off with a thicker weave of the fibers underfoot for stronger mounting and additional stiffness. Despite a rubber foil between the base and the core, testers still found these skinny pickles to be chattery. “Be careful at the top speed hitting anything other than soft, groomed trails,” warned one tester.

VOILE.COM | $750 | 1,594g (161) | 93/63/79 | 161

$

POMOCA

SWISS MADE

ZIPFIT
MV PRO
BOA
RC4
FISCHER

FISCHER
RC4 PRO DYN

The RC4 Pro DYN incorporates some touring features—a Grip-Walk sole and tech inserts in the toe—but there's no walk mode or pin inserts in the heel, meaning this boot is for users of options like the Shift, Cast system, Duke PT or true alpine bindings only. Two buckles on the carbon-infused cuff are paired with an H+i1 Boa on the foot and the shell is made with TPU plastic, which is heavier and offers a more progressive flex than the Grilamid found in AT boots. "Plug boot performance in a plug boot package," quipped a race coach. Others were drawn to the ZipFit liner, which a freeride competitor described as, "Fantastic, it was so supportive. Even when it was out of the shell my ankle was held in place so well it felt like it was in an ankle brace."

FISCHERSPORTS.COM | $1,150 | 4,920g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 100mm
| SIZES: 24.5-29.5

SHIFT ALPHA
BOA
SALOMON

SALOMON
SHIFT ALPHA BOA 130

"Built to command the biggest skis on the market in any terrain," said a sport touring boot nerd of Salomon's Shift Alpha Boa 130. A substantial polyurethane shell, recycled polyolefin and pex cuff, and Freespine (a durable plastic bar connecting the lower shell and cuff) were praised by testers for impressive stiffness. On the boot, a Boa cinches a cable and attached Exobelt—a rubber strap stretching from the inner heel to the cable—to secure the entire foot. Two buckles and a power strap dial in the cuff. A lever opens to allow for some movement in the ankle, scoring 5/7 for ergonomics, though one tester found the claimed 55 degrees of motion in walk mode left him wanting. A freeride tester recommended these "for intermediate to advanced skiers looking for an inbounds boot that can bootpack and do short-medium tours with emphasis on downhill ski feel."

SALOMON.COM | $950 | 3,500g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 98mm | SIZES: 22.5-29.5

♀

HAWX
BOA
ATOMIC

ATOMIC
HAWX PRIME XTD 130 BOA GW

This boot's story is in the name: Hawx (freeride oriented) Prime (medium last) XTD (tourable) 130 (stiff) Boa (a knob for micro adjustments). Put it all together, and you've got "a good 50/50 boot option," per one Vermont freerider. A 6/7 downhill performance comes from the same classic polyurethane shell and Mimic Platinum liner found in Atomic's alpine boots. According to our Vermonter, they would have been a seven if the flex was slightly more progressive. A Montana ski patroller disagreed, "These boots ski well with good forward pressure and lateral stiffness to drive the biggest skis." Both thought the walk mode was functional for the weight class. While one dug the snug, even fit of the Boa and the marked measurement lines, the other struggled to get the boots on. "More effort than a day of work," he griped.

ATOMIC.COM | $1,150 | 4,034g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 24-32.5

24

ATOMIC
HAWX

ATOMIC
HAWX ULTRA XTD 115 BOA W GW

The Ultra is the narrowest last of Atomic's Hawx XTD line, and testers noted that it's also 3 millimeters shorter than the wider Prime in a 24.5. "It's noticeable," said a tester of the fit. Both options have an alpine-inspired polyurethane shell, three options for forward lean (13, 15 and 17 degrees) and a Boa on the lower. "For touring centric skiers who want to maintain downhill performance," said a Wasatch uphill athlete. "Nice, simple walk mode," she added, but others were not as complimentary of the 54-degree ROM. "More at home in the resort than long backcountry days," said her Teton counterpart. "Limited range of motion makes the Hawx a better tool for sidecountry laps than long approaches." The pair agreed that the liner—Atomic's Mimic Platinum that is used in the non-touring Hawx—was thin in the foot and needs to be molded before skiing.

ATOMIC.COM | $1,050 | 3,240g
FLEX: 115 | LAST: 98mm | SIZES: 22-27.5

♀

LANGE
XT3 TOUR 130 MV 2.0
LANGE
XT3 TOUR PRO 2.0

XT3 TOUR 2.0

AWARD-WINNING FREETOUR PERFORMANCE

20 EDITORS' CHOICE 25
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GET UP TO GET AWAY

Move beyond the boundaries, break away from the masses, and find your own alpine playground. The all-new XT3 TOUR 2.0 is meticulously crafted to account for every moment of your next freetouring adventure. Downhill most definitely included.

lange-boots.com

Just Boots
LANGE

ROXA

R3 130 TI I.R.

Since this three-piece boot's flex pattern comes from its tongue it just feels different from an overlap boot. That feeling makes the R3 130 TI I.R. perfect for those of the freeride persuasion, for whom the stated 52-degree ROM is just about right. Full Grilamid construction, lightweight cable style buckles and the ability to increase its stride bring versatility to the R3. "The removable tongue provides ample ROM," wrote an astute tester. "A stiff/soft selector accommodates more skiers." Said selector is a switch which engages a bar that directly connects the upper cuff to the lower when flexed forward. Additional upgrades include a removable tongue that is now easier to repair and a reinforced walk mode with the ability to change forward lean. All of these features together make a boot that one longtime, Vermont-based tester said is intended "for those looking for a nimble, destroyer class, three-piece boot."

ROXA.COM | $950 | 3,160g | FLEX: 130
LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 24.5-30.5

DYNAFIT

TIGARD 110

Dynafit's Tigard 110 is a "beefy boot that still felt light enough to actually want to walk in," a Wasatch shredder said. "Felt stiffer than a 110 flex," she added—a quality which multiple testers, both men and women, pointed out. A four-buckle boot with a Grilamid shell and glass fiber-loaded Grilamid cuff, the Tigard 110 stood out for it's on snow feel (rated 5/7) and walk mode (rated 6/7). "A good 50/50 boot," said a lady shredder. While she was one of a few women who felt the boot needed some work to improve the fit, a male tester described these boots as "comfortable for wide hobbit feet." Bottom line, who are the Tigard 110's for? "Those looking for all the great attributes of the 130 in a more approachable, progressive-flexing package," according to an OG tester who's familiar with both.

DYNAFIT.COM | $800 | 3,100g | FLEX: 110
LAST: 101mm | SIZES: 23-31.5

30 YEARS OF GEAR:

MONDO SIZE 22

We all know what they say about big feet. You'll have no problem finding a ski boot. Historically, that's not been the case for women with a shoe size under, say, an 8. I'm a 6.5, and while that's on the smaller side, it's not exactly something to call Prince Charming about. There are thousands of women out there with my foot size or smaller who've been stiffed for decades when looking for proper AT boots. Getting the right boot can improve control, cut back on fatigue, and it's humanizing to have an extended size range.

I lucked out. As I got into the sport, a shift was already occurring within the industry. In typical fashion, Scarpa kicked it off with their Gea line in 2010, offering a fairly aggressive boot in a size 22. By 2014, I'd scored Scarpa's Freedoms with a BSL of 267. I still have them—now a dinged-up lime green. Tecnica introduced their Cochise series in 2011 with a size 22; then came the later push with a 2019 drop of Salomon's QST Pro 100 W in size 22 and the Atomic Hawx Ultra XTD 95 W, also offered in a 22 for the 2020/21 season. Last year, Atomic sold their stiffest touring boot—the Hawx Ultra XTD 130 Boa GW—in a 22 and this year, Tecnica is making their award-winning Zero G Guide Pro in a women's model for the first time.

The list of hard-charging, high-quality, small-shelled boots goes on, but the result remains the same: Women can now find boots that offer precision and support. It's a sign of inclusivity, even if one driven by dollar signs.

—Lucy Higgins, Editor 2014-2021

MHW ATHLETE: ERIN SPONG
SEEK WILDER PATHS
IMAGE: ANNE CLEARY
FLOW STATE
MIND STATE
MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR

DALBELLO

CABRIO MV FREE 95 WIF

"This boot is great for someone with a high-volume foot that wants to ski the resort and be able to tour," an ex-racer commented. The Cabrio MV Free 95 has a construction and materials similar to the stiffer unisex MV Free 120, including an instep buckle that's attached to the pivot point on the shell in order to snug down the heel. "The three-piece design means you get a great walk mode," said a Wasatch skintrack crusher. As with any boot, dialing in fit is key. Most testers who tried this softest-flexing model among the Cabrio Free line noted the boot runs a bit big. "I didn't have great boot-to-ski communication," reported a Teton tourer. But a Vermont sidecountry specialist who found the right fit enthused, "These could be worn all day. Very comfortable, like the Uggs of ski boots."

DALBELLO.COM | $650 | 3,580g
FLEX: 95 | LAST: 101mm | SIZES: 22.5-27.5

$ ♀

ATOMIC

BACKLAND XTD CARBON 120

"This boot fits and skis like a dream. Really snug fit without odd ankle pressure points," said a freeride coach. A near universal fit is achieved with a cable lace system, which is tightened by a single buckle and evenly distributes pressure over the forefoot. "Midstep buckle and ladder incorporate with a wire forefoot wrap for Boa-like snugness," that freeride coach explained. To get the claimed 74-degree ROM, Atomic made a clever cutout on top of the ankle. In walk mode, there's nothing to block the forward stride, but when locked down for the descent a carbon-infused Grilamid cuff wraps the calf and attaches to the lower via a carbon spine. Though testers rated the flex lower than the claimed 120, they still applauded the downhill performance. "Inbounds or out of bounds, these boots deliver quality skiing performance," judged one four-buckle-oriented tester.

ATOMIC.COM | $1,100 | 2,760g | FLEX: 120
LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 24-30.5

24

SCOTT

COSMOS RE-SOURCE

Part of Scott's sustainably sourced hardgoods line, the new Cosmos Re-source derives its eco-credibility from a bio-based Pebax Rnew shell, fully recycled strap and partially recycled liner and sole. "Intermediate or lighter-weight skiers might like this boot a lot, as it's quite easy to squish in and out of turns," said an intermediate tester who tried this soft-flexing, three-buckle boot long term. The Re-source performs similarly to his daily driver, the Scott Cosmos Tour, "except for feeling much softer fore and aft." He was impressed it tours just as well: "Easy strides, like being on a moving sidewalk," he added of the 60-degree ROM. Plus, they're comfy. "The fit is insanely good for those of us with strangely shaped thin feet but who need a wide last," said tester added. Notably, he specified, "The heel hold has the kung-fu grip of a pre-*Rush Hour* Jackie Chan, but the forefoot is comfy like my Crocs."

SCOTT-SPORTS.COM | $730 | 2,760g
FLEX: 110 | LAST: 103.5mm | SIZES: 25.5-30.5

$

DALBELLO

QUANTUM FREE PRO

"For long backcountry tours where lightness for the long-haul matters, as does having a stiff boot for steep and rowdy descents," said a hard charging tester who scored the two-buckle Dalbello Quantum Free Pro highest for fore/aft and lateral stiffness. Rather than being injected, like most boots, the polyamide and carbon-fiber shell consists of two halves bonded together for lower weight but increased rigidity, per Dalbello. "The shell provides a lot of direct power transfer right to the ski," remarked a powerful tester. A lace-up liner and memory-foam tongue offer customized fit, while the dual-link cuff (it opens front and back) provides a 65-degree range of motion. A long-time tester with an average foot shape noted, "I'd question the 100-millimeter last. It feels like a low volume 98-millimeter last." But he appreciated other features: "A gaiter and a big throat make it easy to ford rivers with."

DALBELLO.COM | $900 | 2,600g
FLEX: 130 | LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 24.5-30.5

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DALBELLO

QUANTUM FREE W

Unchanged since last year's Editors' Choice award, the Quantum Free W is built for "skiers who value comfort for long walks with performance for downhill," said an impressed tester. Like this boot's unisex sibling, the Quantum Free Pro, a bonded, two-part polyamide and carbon-fiber shell provides stiffness while a dual-link cuff offers a 65-degree ROM. "This boot skis remarkably well for how light it is," raved an easy turning tester; another called out the "very impressive lateral stiffness for such a lightweight boot." A couple of testers differed on flex and forward lean. Said one collegiate Nordic racer, "It was really flexed forward in ski mode. I could not stand up straight with these locked in." Countered an alpine ski racer, "The flex felt very vertical and straight up and down whereas I would have liked to have been pitched more forward."

DALBELLO.COM | $800 | 2,400g
FLEX: 105 | LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 22.5-27.5

24 ♀

TECNICA

ZERO G PRO TOUR W

Just like the men's model, the new women's Zero G Pro W gains downhill prowess through a Grilamid and carbon co-injected Power Frame Construction and Double Blocking walk mode. "The new lateral carbon stiffening bands remove any of the looseness rotationally in previous models," wrote a youth freeride competitor. While the 125 flex rating was a highlight, the claimed 60-degree ROM also garnered praise. One tester noted, "Take it for a quick lap in the sidecountry or walk until you wonder why you're doing this for fun." She's spent a few seasons in the Zero G Scout—a softer, lighter boot that was previously the closest women's option to the Pro—and approved of the updated fit: "Higher volume over the instep than previous models. Average to moderately low volume feet will appreciate the extra room with the update."

BLIZZARD-TECNICA.COM | $899 | 2,256g
FLEX: 125 | LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 22.5-27.5

♀

30 YEARS OF GEAR:

SCARPA MAESTRALE

The Maestrale and then the Maestrale RS, which to me is a far superior boot, for sure inform this sport touring category, and a lot of competitors followed suit to compete here.

When the Maestrale debuted in 2010, there were plenty of other boots that were kind of in the ballpark of stiffness and lightness, but that boot just skied better than most of the others in that world at that time. Torsionally, it was probably the stiffest—it's the blessing and the curse of that rather strange and totally unique closure/buckle system. It provided a rotational power transfer that allowed you to ski a decently light boot and a pretty fat ski.

Most of the plastics Scarpa used existed prior, but there was just some vagueness in the marriage between the cuff and the shell with other boots at that time. With the Maestrale, it's really all about the tongue and it almost has a wrap. It splits the difference between a three-piece Cabrio-type boot—which gets its stiffness rearward, and to a certain degree forward, from the tongue—versus a four-buckle boot, à la any new kind of freeride, two-piece backcountry boot like that Lange XT. The Maestrale closure system splits that difference. What the magic is in all of that I don't really know, but it works. *—As told by Adam Howard, Editor and Publisher 2002-Present*

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SCARPA
F1 XT

The F1 XT brings a sharpness to the speed touring category. Replacing the original F1's swinging Pebax tongue with a gaiter increases its ROM to a stated 72 degrees and changes how it flexes on the descent. "Built for skimo hardos who want a high-performance boot that they can still ski downhill," wrote a Utah-based tester. The boot's downhill stiffness no longer comes from the tongue, instead force is channeled through a much larger walk mode lever and a carbon/Grilamid cuff. Also, the original F1 lacked traditional buckles while the XT features two, allowing for a more locked down feel. "This boot is for racing your friends uphill. Light enough and with a super walk mode, so that you may be able to beat your cardio-god friends." On the whole, the XT is what a tester called "one of the most approachable rando boots on the market."

SCARPA.COM | $899 | 2,290g | FLEX: 95 | LAST: 100mm | SIZES: 23-31

24

DYNAFIT
MEZZALAMA BOOT

Named for the Mezzalama Trophy, Dynafit's Mezzalama boot is unsurprisingly "built for someone who's priority is speed and light weight," a Bozeman speed tourer said. "Well suited for rec racing and fast and far tours," added another. A carbon fiber-reinforced Grilamid shell is secured by a Twistfit at the front of the ankle, which employs a set of cables to tighten the boot. A Race Lock cable system tightens the upper cuff. The boot earned a 5/7 for stiffness from female testers, but men were less impressed. Still, one said, "Skis above its 4-pound [per pair] weight." All genders agreed on the walk-mode, whose 60-degree ROM they scored a 6/7. Though one skintrack fiend found "the fancy sailors knots for boot top adjustment take a minute to get your head around," she praised that the tech "allows micro adjustment."

DYNAFIT.COM | $800 | 1,750g | FLEX: N/A | LAST: 97mm | SIZES: 23-31

SCARPA
ALIEN

Much like your kooky uncle who has said he's seen their namesake, the Alien has stuck around thanks to a balance of comfort, feather weight and surprising skiing performance. "The Alien makes a strong case as the best light touring boot," said one tester. Touches like its Speed Lock Lite walk mode are key to that mix. When switching to ski mode, pulling down on the walk mode lever also pulls a Dyneema cord tight around the cuff. That gets rid of the need for a separate cuff buckle, saving weight and time in transitions. The shell and cuff are made of Grilamid reinforced with glass and carbon fibers. Adding those long glass fibers deadens some of the chatter that gets transmitted through carbon in icy conditions. "I honestly forgot I had these on which is exactly what I want in a boot," wrote one tester.

SCARPA.COM | $749 | 1,740g | FLEX: 95 | LAST: 99mm | SIZES: 24-30

$

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
DYNAFIT TLT 5

The boot that shifted things was the Dynafit TLT 5. At that time there wasn't much of a market for rando race boots. There might have been a few boots that were more geared towards that market, but people wouldn't have used them for touring. Still, the TLT 5 became so popular. It had more articulation than any other boot at the time. It incorporated lighter weight Grilamid nylon into the lower. The combination of the carbon cuff and the lighter, thinner, Grilamid shell was certainly a milestone. I had 5s for a while. I actually still have old TLT6s, which are essentially the same. At the end of a long day, if I'm not driving, I'll just leave them on in the car. That's how comfortable they are. *—As told by Lance Riek, Technical Editor 1995-Present*

Madison Rose Ostergren

HELICON LITE POLE ❄ XPLORE S MITT

SVALBARD, NORWAY

P: Liam Doran

lekiusa.com

EDITORS'
CHOICE
BINDINGS

BINDINGS

◢ "LIGHT WEIGHT WITH STRENGTH."

DYNAFIT | RIDGE BINDING

◢ "GREAT POWER TRANSFER."

TYROLIA | ALMONTE 12 PT

◢ "ALL AROUND INCREDIBLE."

ATK | FREERAIDER 15 EVO

◢ "WHO DOESN'T WANT TO SKI ON A PIVOT?"

CAST | FREETOUR 2.0 PIVOT 18

DYNAFIT
RIDGE BINDING

Meet the Ridge. Handmade in Europe from aluminum, stainless steel and a synthetic composite (plastic with additional strengthening ingredients) Dynafit's new binding blends light weight with strength. "Cool to see new binding ideas," said a tester with a flair for the handmade (though more for denim fanny packs than skis).

"Skiing performance was stellar," said a Teton ripper who put these bindings to the test on sun affected crud. "I forgot I had a pin binding on my feet to drive the very burly Tigard ski." Earning 5/7 for everything from power transfer and lateral control to stability and ski to snow feel, per testers, the Ridge impressed on the descent. Plus, with a RV-equivalent range of 4-12, these bindings can cater to a range of skiers.

Flip the heel unit around and you're ready for the skintrack. Flat, 35- and 54-millimeter heel risers offer a 5/7 tester-scored skinning stride across terrain. On the rear, "A turntable that is seemingly foolproof and easy for anyone to rotate will allow people that struggle with traditional heel pieces a great binding," said a Montanan tester. Our Teton tester did find the latch which releases the rear tower "klunky." But up front, he and the Montanan agreed on the toe piece's ease of entry thanks to the wide toe plate and titanal boot stopper.

DYNAFIT.COM | $600 | 820g | 4-12 RV
BRAKES (mm): 75-94, 95-108, 109-125
CRAMPONS (mm): 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 130 ($90)

$

TYROLIA
ALMONTE 12 PT

In 1928, Tyrolia made their first touring binding, the Almonte. While the original pair are a far cry from the latest rendition, it's only fitting that the new Almonte 12 PT airs nearly 100 years since the inception of its namesake. "This new product is perfect for long days adventuring in the mountains," said a seasoned tester who was pleased with the light weight (thank you bio-based plastic and carbon fiber construction). "Intuitive and effective, light and exciting," raved a third-year tester.

From first step in, the Almonte 12 PT impressed testers. "Easy to find the toe pins with a snowy boot," said a Tahoean who appreciated the repositioned pins, which Tyrolia designed to be narrower to help guide boots in. "Walked nicely," added a Wasatch crusher. "Really like the metal heel risers—the shape made them easy to snap with a pole!" When not on the flats, these risers can be set at 6.5 or 12 degrees.

Gushing reviews didn't stop on the descent. "Great power transfer," said a tester who used the adjustable heel piece (12-RV or 5-RV equivalent U-pins can be swapped with the factory 8-RV). Strong downhill performance also included stability and ski to snow feel which both scored 6/7. While the primary concern was the untested durability of the plastic/carbon design, "the new Tyrolia binding didn't expose any flaws," remarked a veteran tester.

TYROLIA.COM | $575 | 650g | 5, 8, 12 RV
BRAKES (mm): 90, 105, 120
CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 105, 120 ($125)

$

CAST
FREETOUR 2.0 PIVOT 18

If you count tenths of grams or ski a two-buckle boot, read no further. But if you're looking for a touring binding that doesn't sacrifice ski performance, as one tester put it, "Who doesn't want to ski on a Pivot? They are the best binding, best elasticity, great power transfer, good reliability."

In simple terms, the Freetour 2.0 is a Look Pivot with a walk mode. An alpine toe is swapped with a tech toe via a 1-inch button. (Like hardboot splitboards, this is a touring-only toe.) A bar on the heel flips to lock out the brakes. According to a race dad, "When the toe is switched to the tech toe, the three positions of the heel riser make this a very effective and efficient uphill binding." A competitive freeskier turned guide explained, "It's not the lightest touring experience, but the toe piece is dependable. The lockout mechanism works really well."

The new 2.0 carries upgraded AFD plates (compatible with ISO 9523, ISO 5355 and GripWalk 23223 boots) and a plastic mounting plate that replaced the four screw posts to hold the toe in place. Per a Teton tester, icing was minimal except on extremely wet spring days. After a full season, he concluded, "Huge improvement both for the use and mounting purposes. The downhill performance cannot improve much more."

CASTTOURING.COM | $780 | 2,680g (SKI)/2,000g (TOURING)
8-18 DIN | BRAKES (mm): 95, 105, 115, 130
DYNAFIT CRAMPON COMPATIBLE

ATK
FREERAIDER 15 EVO

Italy exports Ferrari, Gucci and ATK. While two are for the upper echelon, the last one makes a binding that is "just all around incredible for its weight, great on the uphill, better on the down and intuitive to use," according to a skid who prefers luxuries like Tacomas and craft beers.

The Raider Evo comes in a svelte aluminum and POM (stiff and stable) plastic package, and it's packed with tech, like the adjustable release value in the toe piece. Matching the toe and heel release values allows the skier to make full use of the 14 millimeters of elastic travel, 25 degrees of rotation in the heel piece and a cam release system (the two pins in the heel are parallel instead of u-shaped, making stepping in and out easier). "They ski so well and natural, no issues at all with performance there," said a tester.

An aluminum Power Plate replaces last year's plastic model under the heel piece. Not only does this up durability, per ATK, it also increases power transfer, a category that testers awarded the Raider Evo 15 with a 6.5 out of 7. Ergonomics scored a 6, specifically for transitioning between walk and ski mode with a quick turn of the heel. The only gripe was about clicking into the toe: "If they were to implement a 'bumper' system there, they might have the perfect binding," said our luxury loving skid.

ATKBINDINGS.COM | $760 | 790g | 7-15 RV
BRAKES (mm): 86, 91, 97, 102, 108, 120
CRAMPONS (mm): 70, 75, 86, 91, 97, 102, 108, 120, 135 ($75-120)

24

ATOMIC

SHIFT^2 13 MN

In past models, testers found the Shift's AFD plate to be finicky. Atomic heard their complaints and changed the position of the screw to be less exposed under the boot and swapped plastic parts for metal. Testers approved of the upgrade with one saying, "Less jumping up and down while you adjust the binding, which resulted in not having issues with the toes getting loose." The walk mode lever that turns the DIN-certified alpine binding into a tech toe for touring was also updated to better stay in place. One tester noted, "The toe tour lock worked well and was quite positive, potentially too hard to pull up now." Dedicated pin skiers weren't sold on the weight or single heel riser, but a freeride athlete pointed out that these bindings aren't for those skiers. "It is a great binding in terms of downhill performance and aggressive skiing," he explained. "Having a traditional heel with forward/down pressure helps avoid prereleasing. Good on an in/out of bounds ski or if someone only wanted one ski."

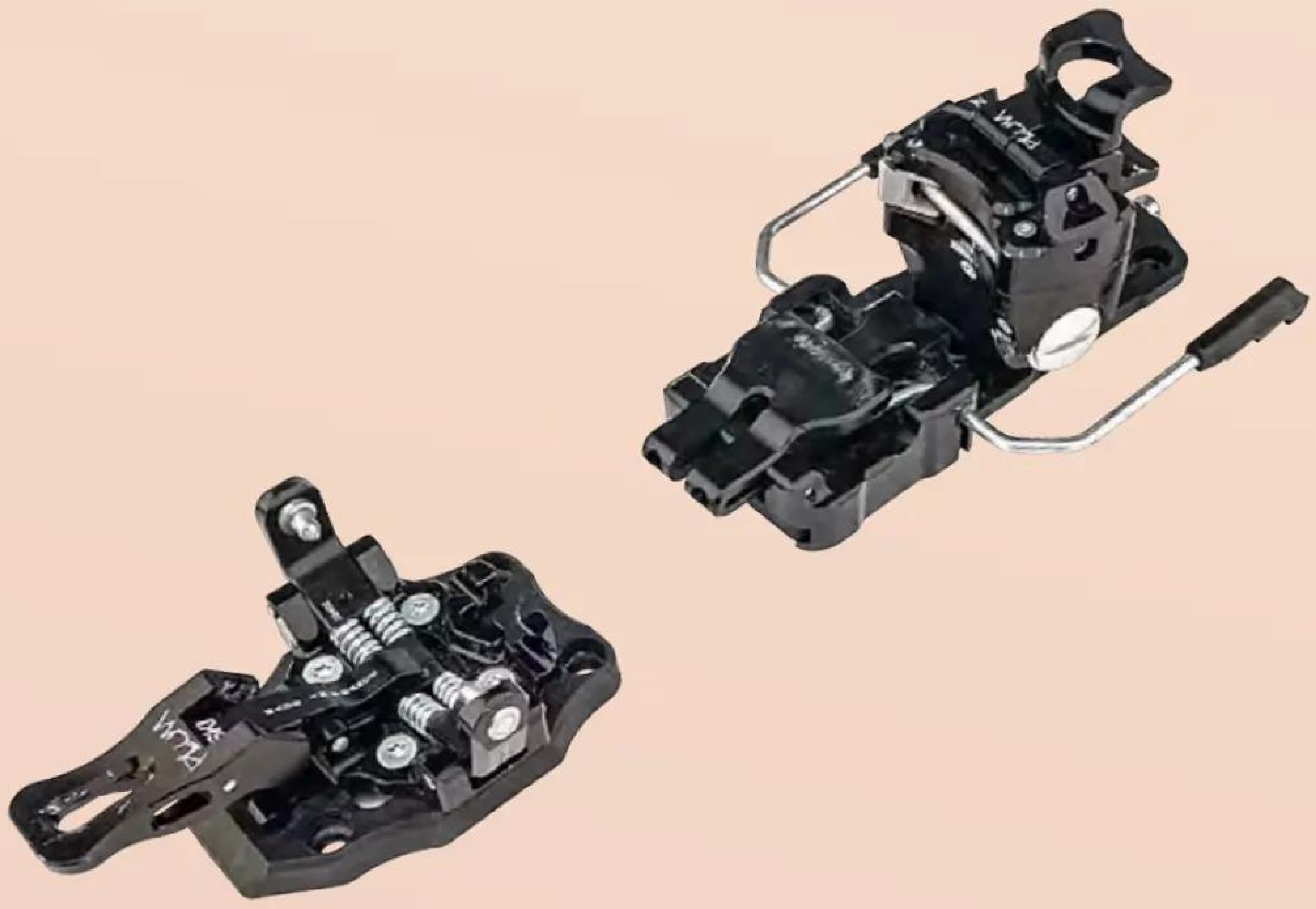
ATOMIC.COM | $800 | 1,840g | 6-13 DIN
BRAKES (mm): 90, 100, 110, 120 | CRAMPONS (mm): 100, 120 ($100)

FRITSCHI

TECTON 13

The new Fritschi Tecton is a jack of all trades when it comes to downhill and touring performance. This binding carries a DIN value used to rate alpine bindings instead of the RV equivalent in most AT options. There's an impressive 26-milimeters of elastic travel in the toe and 9-milimeters in the heel, which one tester called "worthy, remarkable beyond any other." Fritschi added more forged aluminum to high-wear places, like the toe lever and heel release, but still incorporates glass and carbon fiber-infused plastic where possible to keep the weight low. As for ergonomics, a ski guide familiar with past models explained, "Less fiddley and more functional, but that's not to say everything is fixed." While she found the seven- and 12-degree heel risers and the ski/walk mode toe lever easy to engage, she struggled to clip into the pins. But was it worth it for the ride? Perhaps, as she concluded, "It still achieves the same alpine-like performance. Probably the best you can find in a pin toe."

BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM | $680 | 1,200g | 5-13 DIN
BRAKES (mm): 90, 100, 110, 120 | CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 100, 115 ($90-98)



PLUM

KARIBOU 14 STOPPER

Hailing from the foothills of France's Mont Blanc, the longest trip this Plum Karibou 14 made was to Gear Test Week. Prior to that, the binding traveled only 20 kilometers (that's French for 12 miles) in its entire manufacturing process. The binding features 8 millimeters of elasticity in the toe, while the heel provides up to a 14-equivalent RV. Tested in boots with two to four buckles, the Karibou 14 stood out as "a durable, versatile touring binding with confidence-inspiring skiability," according to a mountain town nomad. On the skintrack, the two heel risers proved easy to flick between, per said tester, offering three levels: flat, 59 and 84 millimeters. What she lamented was the spring resistance in the toe lever and the ineffective stopper which made stepping in difficult. Still, our tester applauded the Karibou overall, saying, "A perfect binding to crush some vert and even more terrain."

FIXATION-PLUM.COM | $739 | 1,100g | 7-14 RV
BRAKES (mm): 85-100, 100-120 | CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 100, 110, 120 ($79)

Photo: Tonin Woodhall
SPYDER
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EXO Shield 3-Layer Stretch Fabric
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Spyder.com

MARKER

CRUISE 12

Last year's EC winner is a true middle ground option, with all the features to make a long day of touring easy, uncomplicated and comfortable. A rubber stop pad and wider insert platform make clicking into the pins a breeze, especially compared to the historically finicky Marker Alpinist. Then, twist the heel piece 180 degrees and stomp the brake pad down to enter touring mode. On the up, 8 and 12 degree risers provide multiple options for heel lift while independently adjustable vertical and horizontal release offers security on the descent. The Cruise lives up to its green colorway too. Recycled plastic is used in areas that don't receive load (the brake and heel housing) and the remaining plastic is derived from sustainable castor oil. Per Marker, the result is a 63% reduction in the Cruise's carbon footprint compared to traditional materials.

MARKERBINDINGS.COM | $650 | 950g | 6-12 RV
BRAKES (mm): 90, 105 | CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 105, 120 ($99)

24

SALOMON

MTN SUMMIT 12 BR

Save a horse, ride an MTN Summit! "If you want to get a little cowboy in the backcountry but don't want to drag an alpine binding with a walk mode, the MTN Summit is the answer," a former guide said. Salomon's MTN Summit 12 BR returns unchanged this year with a primarily glass fiber construction. "Light, durable, simple," per a hard charger. Highly rated for stability, ski to snow feel and walking performance, the toe bar and a walk/ski-mode heel lever were also praised by testers. "A pretty user-friendly binding," said a first-year tester. Our former guide highlighted the 17 millimeters of elastic travel: "Plenty for absorbing all the chunder, crud and crap you want to push a ski through." She did warn against icing under the brake plate but found it easy to remove with a pole tip.

SALOMON.COM | $600 | 830g | 6-12 RV
BRAKES (mm): 80, 90, 100, 110, 120
CRAMPONS (mm): 80, 90, 100, 110 ($100)

24

DYNAFIT

SEVEN SUMMITS BINDING

Dynafit's minimalistic Seven Summits binding, stood out as, per a tester, "THE binding for those getting into the sport or anybody who doesn't want to break the bank." A blend of aluminum, synthetic composite and stainless steel makes the Seven Summits durable. Up front the binding features bumpers to guide boots into its pins, ice-clearing capacity and an easy-to-use ski crampon slot. "Super quick to step into," said a Vermonter of the toe. There are two riser heights (42 and 54 millimeters), but our tester wasn't impressed with the need to spin the heel piece to swap between them. "Not the most convenient aids, but for the most part one riser is enough. I just rarely do the full 180 rotation for that next level up," said Vermonter added. Skiability was on par for tech bindings, but with a 4-10 RV, it's not rated for the hardest of chargers.

DYNAFIT.COM | $350 | 640g | 4-10 RV
BRAKES (mm): 75-94, 95-108, 109-125
CRAMPONS (mm): 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 130 ($90)

$

SEEK WONDER
MADE BY NATURE
THIRTY YEARS
EDITORS' CHOICE
2025
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
Belle Tour 156
WNDR
EDITORS' CHOICE
2025
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE
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THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE RIDE: For 2025, our microalgae-derived sidewall now delivers 192% better damping performance than a traditional petroleum-based sidewall. That means less chatter and more confidence underfoot. How much confidence exactly? Enough to garner awards from ski and board testers alike.

WNDR-ALPINE.COM // @wndr_alpine

Selkirk Range, BC. Photo: Carson Meyer

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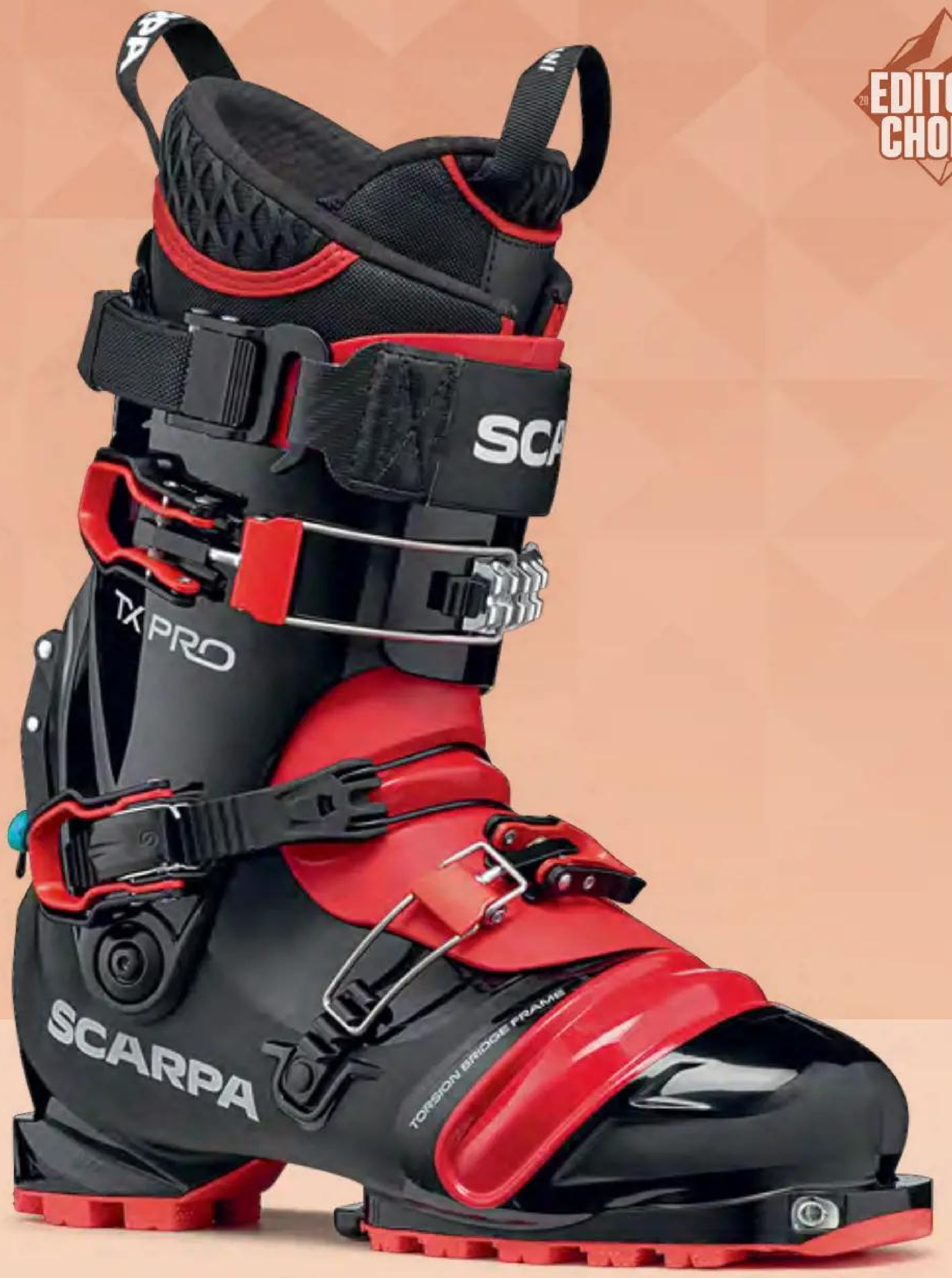
SCARPA TX PRO

EDITORS'
CHOICE
TELEMARK
BOOTS



The TX Pro began as a meeting of the minds in January 2016 in Scarpa's Outdoor Retailer booth. Many ideas were thrown out. Some—like an adjustable flex—were a bridge too far. The rest are there, including an improved walk mode with over 60 degrees of rear cuff motion and 14 forward. Flex resistance is low, too.

Equally important was lighter weight. You can feel the difference in your hand, and the scale proves it: 14 ounces lighter per pair. Materials were shaved throughout with a new torsion frame for improved edging. The outside length shrank almost half an inch, yet the internal last stayed true to size. The toe box remains wide, with a 102-milimeter last, but the instep is tighter. The tongue liner is also lighter.

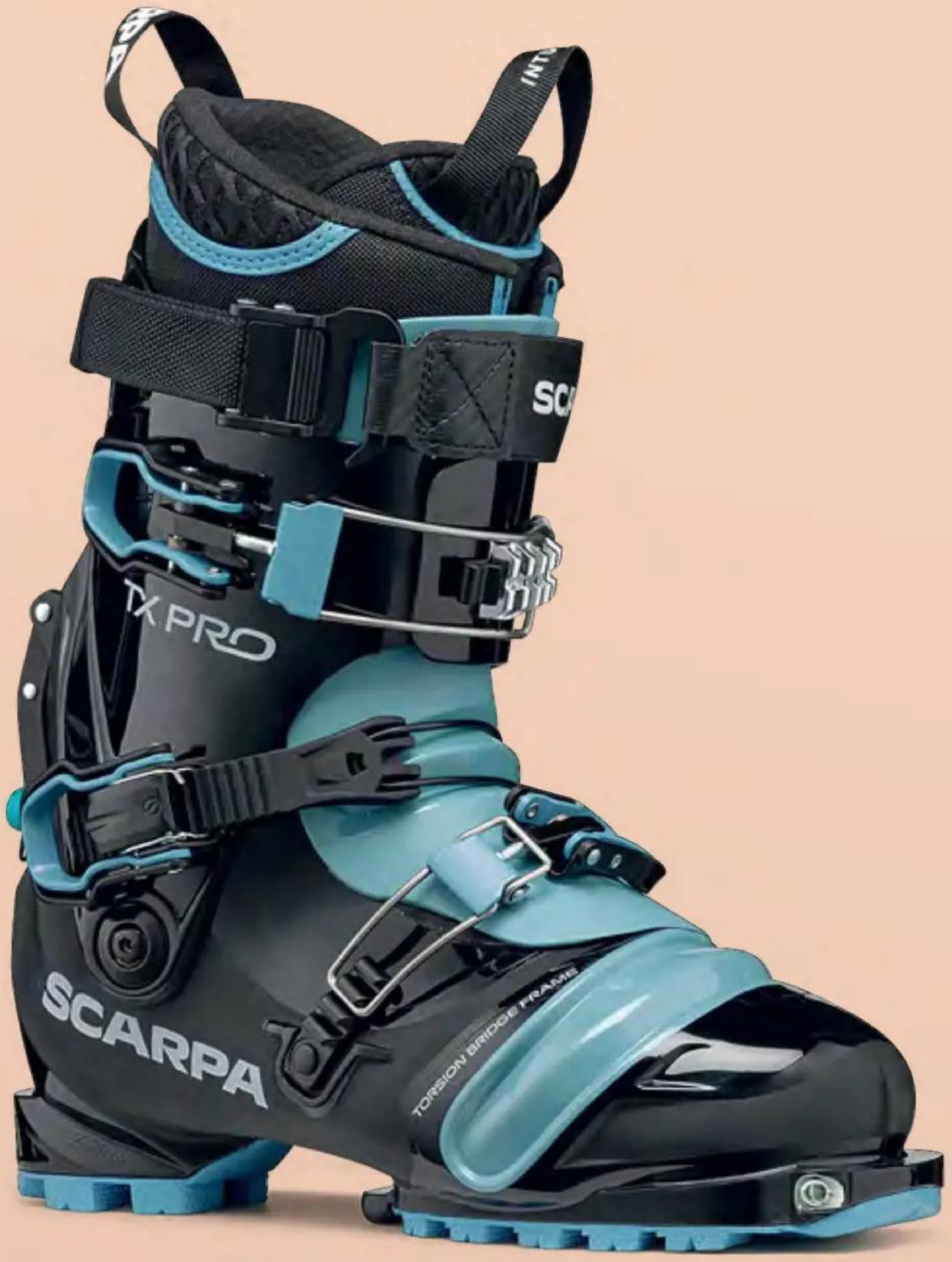
The instep buckle is Scarpa's classic toothed strap, and the front buckle is on top to protect it from being bashed by rocks or ski edges. The toe is sculpted to make it easier to see where the tech cups are to line up with tech toe pins, yet wide enough behind them to work with cage-style bindings.

For now, there's a men's and women's with one flex pattern: stiff. Out of the box I'd say too stiff, and some testers said the bellows were too soft making the flex feel unbalanced. One of our testers, a patroller who telemarks with TX Comps quipped, "It reminds me of my Comps when I first skied 'em. These will probably break in." Perhaps. It depends on what you're used to and what you can or are willing to adapt to. My experience of the late TX Comp *is* similar to this new TX Pro, forcing more pressure through my toes, not ball of foot.

As a matter of encouragement and concession it also appears that, with a few modifications, it may become soft enough for those who prefer a softer flexing boot. By skiing the cuff with a loose top buckle, I could flex my ankle more, and the pressure zone moved behind the bellows. Not like ooh-la-la, but with more control and more "tele sais quoi." The production version will ship with a softer tongue, which can only help. And don't mistake me for saying that's the only style of tele that is valid, it's just the dance step I and many others know and love. Aggressive telemarkers who shred with TX Comps and think the late TX Pro is too soft will love this boot once they break it in, though it may take longer than old TX Comps. For the moment I'm simply thankful it has arrived. I can wait a little longer for a softer version and will enjoy watching how this new TX Pro rocks the tele world. —*Craig Dostie*

[TOP] TX PRO | SCARPA.COM | $849
3,090g | LAST: 102mm | SIZES: 24.5-31

[BOTTOM] TX PRO WMN | SCARPA.COM | $849
2,720g | LAST: 102mm | SIZES: 23-27



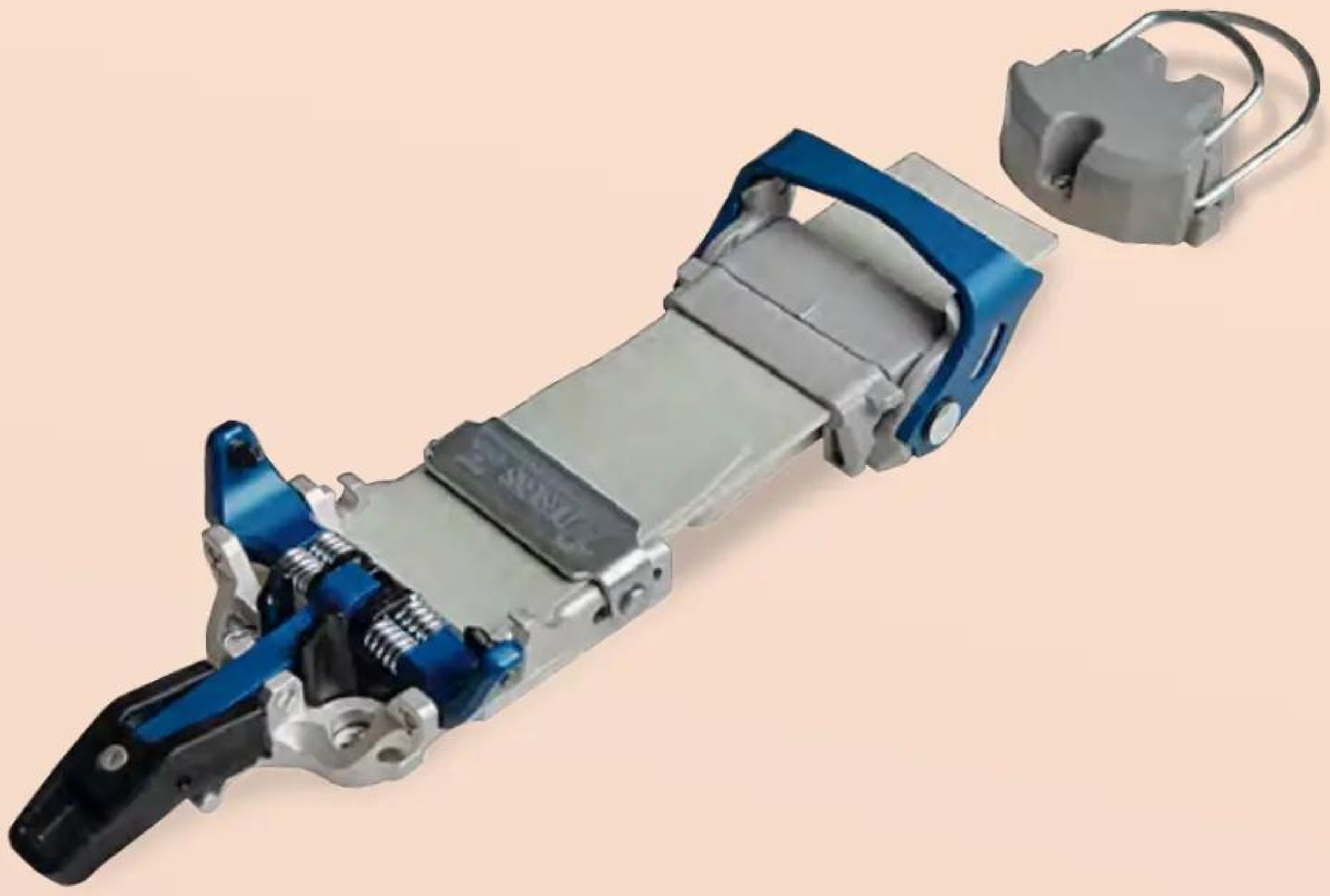
VOILÉ

TTS TRANSIT

Voilé's Telemark Tech System is the ultimate telemark touring binding. Powered by Voilé's time-tested cable yoke for the real heel and a tech toe from France, this binding is the epitome of simplicity, reliability and adjustability. Oddly, it's a tad heavier than its competitors, but far simpler. To adjust tele power, move the cable rods to one of three positions then choose between soft or stiff spring cartridges and standard or long travel. There are a lot of permutations available to dial in your preferred activity level. If you're on a long climb, you have the option to put the cables in your pack, reducing drag weight. The toe may benefit from some visual alignment aids for newbies; I just hook one side on and rotate down—Dynafiddle style. The real heel connection and adjustability make this a good choice when migrating from duckbills but beware, TTS engages way faster than any 75-milimeter cable binding, a standard characteristic of all tech-toe tele bindings. After you adapt, you will like 'em. And if you want reliability for multi-day tours, Voile's TTS is a no brainer. —*CD*

VOILE.COM | $490 | 1,100g | DIN: N/A
BRAKES: N/A | CRAMPONS (mm): 110 ($110)

24 $



22 DESIGNS

LYNX

Besides offering tech toe Dynaficient touring, the Lynx adds a double whammy of NTN power for the turn. Composite flex plates that act like leaf springs work in combination with a pair of compression springs underneath to deliver amazing edge-control, instantaneous engagement and plenty of power. For some, too much power; depends on your flavor. Henceforth, the old standard flex plate is now the stiff option, the old soft the new standard, and there's a new, even thinner, soft plate. You can micro-adjust the activity level by moving the metal bar fore and aft. A few rare but known flaws have been addressed this year. The claw is taller, for more reliable step-in, especially when snow packs underfoot while skinning. There's a new snow-shedding wedge underneath to prevent/minimize snow build up and the claw letting go between turns. When skinning in deep snow, *without* a climbing post, the claw is known to "occasionally" grab the second heel without warning. The cam holding the claw up or down is modified this year, so we'll see if that pesky issue truly fades away. Quibbles aside, the Lynx is the binding of choice for high performance tele at a lightweight. —*CD*

TWENTYTWODESIGNS.COM | $560 | 1,044g | DIN: N/A | BRAKES: N/A
CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 95, 102, 110, 115, 120 ($71-86)

INWILD

MEIDJO 3 SR

Meidjo ticks off all the goals of the original NTN consortium. The tele tension is adjustable from 75-milimeter soft to Hammerhead stiff, and is quick on the draw. You can hit a wide range of micro-adjustable activity by using combinations of compression springs, plus micro-adjustment of the pretension by thumb knobs. The tech toes kick ass with fast action thanks to ball bearings on the cam of the arms. The Meidjo could have better visual alignment, but it's still one of the easiest tech toes to get into. With the springbox flat, click in at the toes, then smash your heel down. You can still get the binding with the classic kickstand, or not. You don't need the kickstand for step-in, but you do need it to retract the claw for flat touring. Forewarning, the kickstand version is prone to boot jack in deep snow. Judicious use of anti-ice tape can minimize it or get the version with the powder casing, where the kickstand pocket is covered, eliminating boot jack. A low, three-degree lift keeps the duckbutt above the claw for touring. Lateral release is adjustable and while it's a tele release, so not DIN certified, it does work. New for this year, a heel post with an anti-friction pad lets your heel slide when it needs to, especially when flat. —*CD*

INWILDOUTDOOR.COM | $599 | 960g | 1-4 RV
BRAKES (mm): 85, 95, 105, 120, 130 ($57) | CRAMPONS (mm): 90, 100, 110 ($85)

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SPLITBOARDS, BOOTS & BINDINGS

SPLIT FEST OR SPLIT TEST?

I had the pleasure of attending two splitboard festivals last season. Highlights included a mellow, fjord-side party wave with 29 international shredders in Norway and a family-style feast in Italy I'll forever remember. Both were community gatherings that welcomed new splitboarders to the skintrack, forged friendships and connected riders to local ranges, rituals and gear makers.

Our annual split test, in many ways, is diametrically opposed to such events. Split brands are welcome to submit gear, but they can't sponsor our test or shmooze the crew. And we certainly don't roll out the red carpet for first timers, relying instead on experienced veterans.

In other ways, test is no different from fest. We forge friendships, in mountains and over meals. We steep ourselves in local culture (shout out Shooting Star Saloon). And we celebrate split gear, demoing piles of it, albeit more critically. But the biggest similarity is simple: We ride, hard as hell, for the love of snowboarding. —*Drew Zieff*

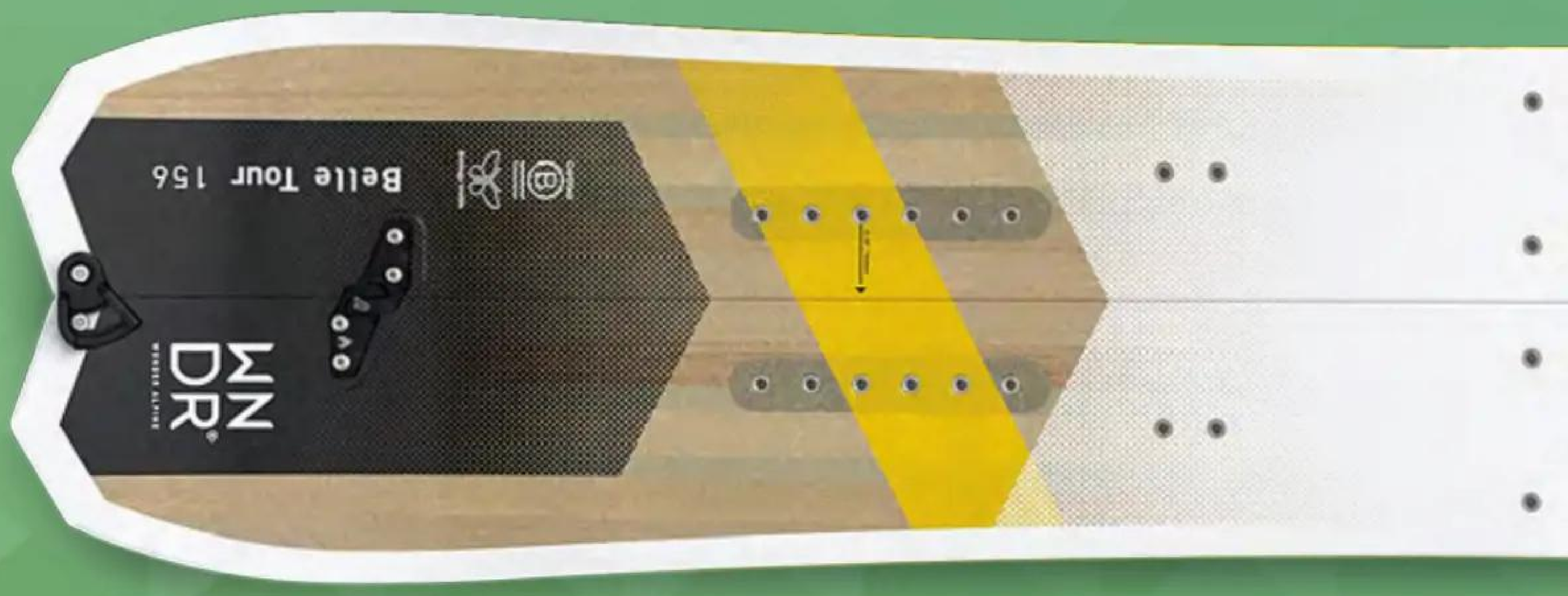
94 Editors' Choice Splitboards
98 Select Splitboards
107 Editors' Choice Boots
108 Select Boots
111 Editors' Choice Bindings
112 Select Bindings

Two years ago, an injured Chris Cloyd served as the Gear Test Week Olympics torch bearer. He much prefered the heelside turns on fresh decks in fresh snow at this year's test. **Iz La Motte**

CARDIFF SNOWCRAFT
BONSAI

◢ “A WIDE-BODY CADILLAC.”

CARDIFF SNOWCRAFT | BONSAI ENDURO SPLIT


Belle Tour 156
WN DR

◢ “SET ME UP FOR FUN.”

WNDR ALPINE | BELLETOUR

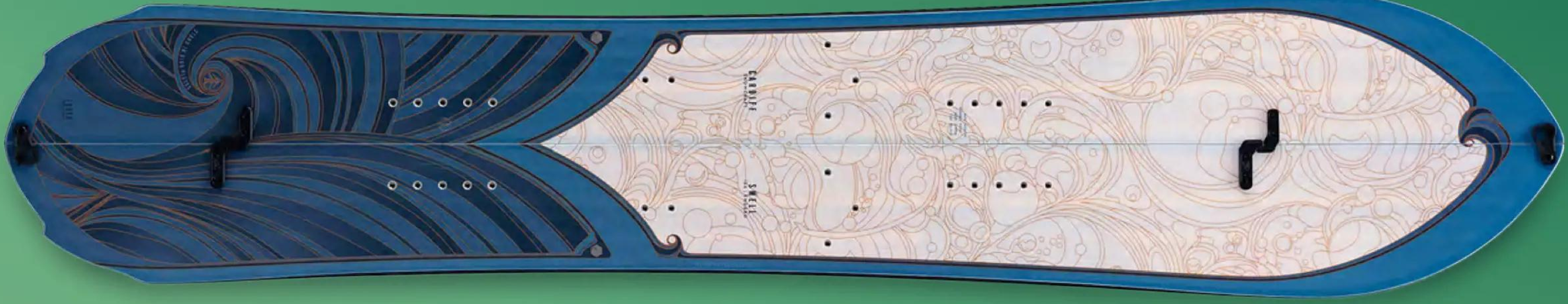
EDITORS’
CHOICE
SPLITBOARDS

SPLIT BOARDS

◢ “A BIG, DAMP, TAPERED CHARGER.”

CHIMERA BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDS | THE HERMIT 165

CHIMERA
BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDS



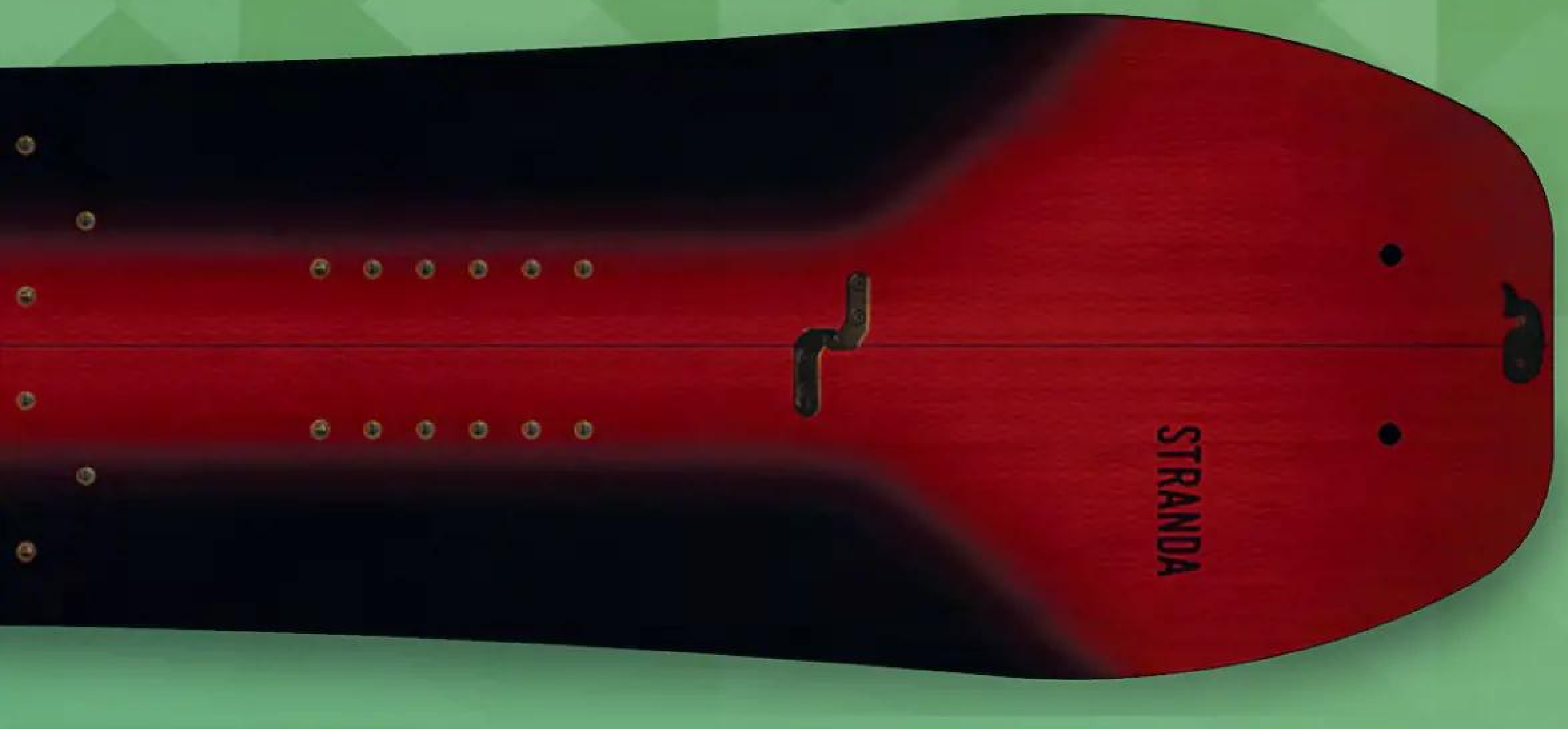
◢ "FUN, RELIABLE, VERSATILE."

CARDIFF SNOWCRAFT | SWELL ENDURO SPLIT

THE MOST VERSATILE GROUP OF DECKS WE'VE EVER REVIEWED.

These six splits ascend categories to perform in any condition and any terrain. Couloir shredding? Yup. White wave surfing and Alaskan spines? Bring it on.

20 EDITORS' 25
CHOICE



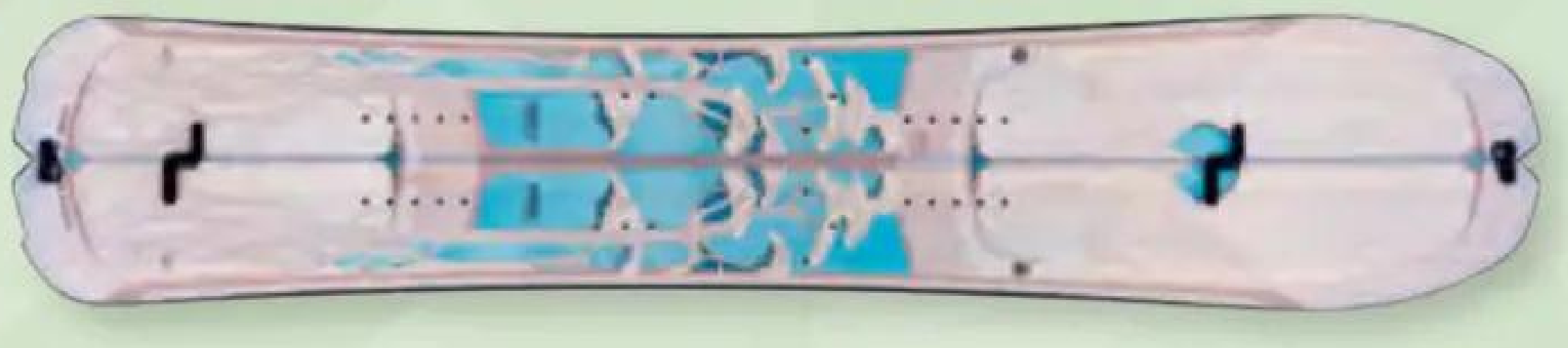
◢ "STIFF AND DAMP TIP TO TAIL."

STRANDA | BIRU BACKCOUNTRY

◢ "WIGGLE AND FLOAT."

JONES SNOWBOARDS | STORM CHASER SPLIT

SPLITBOARDS



CARDIFF SNOWCRAFT

BONSAI ENDURO SPLIT

"Best in test. I'd trust this board in any risky scenario. The dampness made bad snow better. You can really dig into the front and trust it won't give out on you." —John Lauer

Like a wide-body Cadillac with souped-up suspension, the directional, floaty, freeride-bent Bonsai Enduro is the definition of smooth. Cardiff's Enduro construction once again scored high with testers who value shock absorption and the ability to charge in subpar snow. The build consists of a stalwart poplar and paulownia core reinforced with substantial tip-to-tail carbon stringers, while damping comes courtesy of wrapped urethane sidewalls.

"Great for variable snow if the rider is strong enough to charge chop," diagnosed a PNW doctor and powderhound. Upon further dissection, he judged the flex extra stiff in the tail and stiff through the nose, resulting in powerful ollies and reliable landings. He suggested "bring your leg game," as there are much more forgiving decks on the market. That said, some riders did report ollies were harder to come by. "Tail struggled to really snap, but it crushed chunder landings and straightlines," said an all-mountain rider who was still ready to make this "predictable, dependable line slayer" his daily driver.

Between the overall stiffness and the buoyant, mid-wide chassis, the Bonsai isn't the easiest board to get on rail, but once it's tipped, it's guaranteed to rip thanks to camber underfoot and a blended sidecut that excels at medium-to-large-arc turns. "Loves being on edge, especially on steeps. Driving power through the tail was an electric experience," waxed a Wasatch charger. A cruisier Colorado rider did warn, "Turning takes more initiation than expected. It can hold an edge once it's there, but it takes a beat."

CARDIFFSNOW.COM | $950
3,379g (158) | 154, 158

CARDIFF SNOWCRAFT

SWELL ENDURO SPLIT

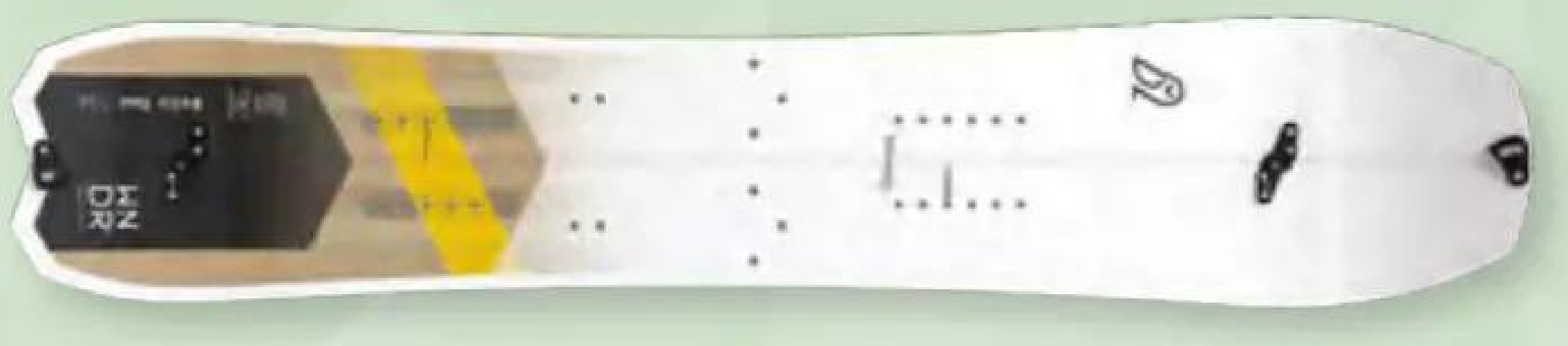
"The beautiful Cardiff Swell cuts a balance between charger and surfer, with a tapered shape and directional flex that likes to go fast and slash." —Dr. Jedediah Doane

With a nose like a big wave gun that tapers a whopping 30 millimeters down to a stepped pintail borrowed from saltwater surfdom, the Swell seems like a one-trick surf machine, right? Sure, it happily hacks windlips and floats through bottomless glades, but, per one tester, "Don't pigeonhole this to powder—it's way more fun, reliable, versatile and high-performance than I initially imagined."

The Swell is camber-dominant, with camber running from the first tail indentations up past the front inserts, while rocker lifts the nose well before the wide points. "The combo provides locked in carves in powder, corn and choppier conditions at speed, while the early rise helps the Swell feel narrower and shorter when weaving through trees," reported a besotted powderhound. An impressed all-mountain rider appreciated the versatile sidecut, too, which Cardiff blended from seven radii. He noted the pintail makes the Swell "quick to adjust or release in the middle of your turn. It's great to charge—and to slash."

The shape alone is worth celebrating, but Cardiff's Enduro construction makes this board an Editors' Choice winner. The slightly heavier, more durable, affordable and dynamic build centers around a poplar and paulownia core with nose-to-tail carbon stringers. Multiple riders called the flex "stout" and "damp" enough to handle variability. "Build quality was excellent, with barely any flexion between board halves," commented a Tahoe tester. Demerits were few: Some riders noted a lack of switch skills and underwhelming ollie power, and a hardbooter reported front binding positioning was limited by the insert configuration.

CARDIFFSNOW.COM | $950
3,284g (160) | 156, 160, 164



WNDR ALPINE

BELLETOUR

"WNDR dialed it in with this board. It's fun for the whole family, from the hard charger to the playful pow princess." —Jerrica Lavooy

Set aside for a moment the commendable environmental qualifications of the BelleTour, which features algae-oil plastics and epoxies and an insert retaining plate made of recycled materials. Before WNDR Alpine's B-Corp certification can be celebrated, its products must rip. "A light splitboard for long days without sacrificing anything on the way down," a Sierra freerider called it.

Now, a clap for sustainability. The BelleTour's Algal Core is a vertically laminated blend of aspen and weight-reducing algae-based polyurethane foam. WNDR's prokaryotic Algal Tech sidewalls replace fossil fuel-laden plastics and, according to internal research, absorb more energy than the planet-warming version. In a word, they're damper, a fact borne out by tester sentiment. "She handled the chop well and set me up for fun regardless of snow conditions," the Sierra freerider's wife said.

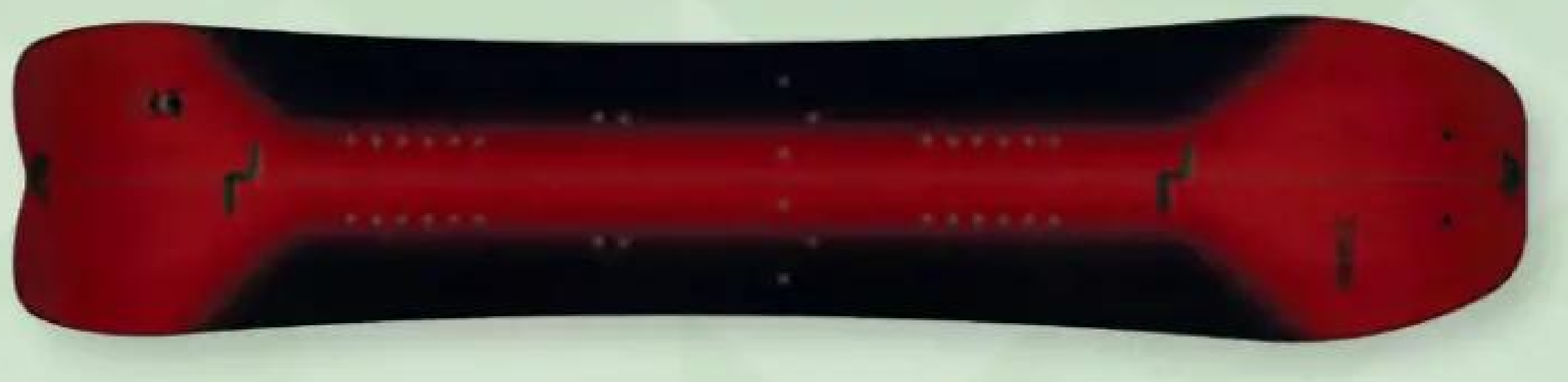
Its shape is classically directional. Setback camber underfoot leads to an early rise nose, and the wide waist and slight swallowtail offer some float, though one tester said, "Deep pow will be challenging without pitch." On the skintrack, where the BelleTour handled deep snow and techy sidehills, the "balanced composition made travel easy," one gal said.

WNDR doesn't assign a flex rating, but this puppy is stiff, with just enough torsional flex for releasing and initiating turns, and it requires a snowboarder willing to push it. Some testers didn't like that. "This board wants to take you for a ride," a smaller lady shredder said of the 152. Many did. "Full speed through chunder or huge turns on a firm volcano," one added, "this board has had my back."

WNDR-ALPINE.COM | $999
3,200g (156) | 148, 152, 156, 159, 164

24 ♀

EDITORS' CHOICE



STRANDA

BIRU BACKCOUNTRY

"True to the roots of snowboarding. Like Beethoven, you might not see something this well composed for generations." —Kordell Black

Volume-shifted decks are all the rage, but many are relegated to being pow sticks or carvers. However, Stranda's new Biru will not be put in those boxes. "I wouldn't be sad if this was my 'everything but big mountain' split," a guide said.

Stranda achieves versatility by not leaning too hard into any one design feature with one notable exception: the massive 6-millimeter camber pocket that ends well past the inserts. "It's incredibly overstable," one Wasatch rider said. "Does it have a gimbal installed?" Otherwise, the nose rocker is gradual, and the tail rocker is sharp but short, creating stability without being hooky. Said a former boardercross racer, "It's stiff and damp tip to tail, and softer torsionally, which makes for easy turn initiation." That profile, according to testers, also serves it well on the skintrack.

True to its name, which translates to devil in the northern European Sámi languages, the Biru is a trickster. "The longer tail allowed for consistent big pop and landings," a Tahoe freestyler said. "Fun to spin on and land switch." A paulownia/poplar core with ash stringers and carbon inlaid for pop keep the skateboard-like Biru lively, testers say, despite the large overall width (270-millimeter waist in the 154 we tested).

Is it a knock to say that something that exceeds expectations isn't also a big-mountain board? No, says one tester, who disagrees with the premise. "I took this on Teton couloirs, Colorado faces and Utah pow meadows," he explained. "It has yet to fail me."

STRANDASNOWBOARDS.COM | $890
3,160g (154) | 154, 157

CHIMERA BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDS

THE HERMIT 165

"Radical performance. Rad graphics. An all-mountain ripper for the large fellas out there." —Chris Bush

The Victor Wembanyama of splitboards, the Hermit is huge and nimble, an astounding performer that left testers agape. "The most impressive super-large board I've seen in a long time," our test's Slender Man said.

A 5'10", 155-pound rider with a penchant for short boards caved and gave this 165 Wide a go. His verdict? "Even little, old me could ride this anywhere—short turns, long turns, alpine, meadows, wherever." With flat camber and rockered ends, the Hermit relies on micro-camber pockets under the inserts for grip and its insanely long turning radius (12 meters) for stability. "Good at speed in multiple snow types," a tall charger said, while a 200-pound Frenchman found it "playful in the trees."

Like Frankenstein's monster, it's big but alive, testers said, thanks to an aspen/poplar core and triaxial fiberglass layup that is stiffest between the feet. Though the torsional stiffness made testers feel secure at speed, the Hermit wasn't so stiff that it locked into carves. One tiny tester found it a bit much to get off the ground, but anyone approaching 6 feet or 200 pounds said it was lively enough for cliff drops and freeride. "A big, damp, tapered charger that's air-ready and send-ready," one called it.

For big riders, our testers say this is your ticket. For smaller ones, if you're scared of hopping on the biggest split you might ever ride, they would tell you to come out of your cave and try it.

CHIMERASNOWBOARDS.COM | $949
3,145g (165) | 165, 165W

JONES SNOWBOARDS

STORM CHASER SPLIT

"The spooned nose is buoyant and surprisingly nimble. The most fun I had at the test was riding this in tight, mellow pow glades." —Drew Zieff

The Storm Chaser is a cult classic from Jones' Surf Series—a collaboration between splitboard godfather Jeremy Jones and surf shaper Chris Christenson. When the pudgy swallowtail was launched in 2015, it was inspired by Christenson's compact, high-volume, fast-gliding Ocean Racer surfboard. This year, Jones overhauled the shape, stretching out the swallowtail and replacing rocker with traditional camber.

"The camber adds versatility. Traverses and chunder were more pleasant," voiced a tester well-versed in Jones splits. But fear not, Storm Chaser loyalists! "The swallowtail hasn't lost its slash-and-turn chops," affirmed another. The 152 sports a tight 6.9-meter sidecut, 20 millimeters of taper and a short effective edge. Between those surfy specs and a medium flex biaxial glass and a two-to-one poplar-to-paulownia core, testers reported backcountry barrel-chasing is still in the cards. And camber runs from the front inserts to the swallowtail apex, adding bite to turns. "You can actually take surf-inspired turns on this bad Larry," reported our Truckee correspondent, content to lay trenches in corn and windbuff if pow isn't firing.

"Wiggle and float are the name of the game. It slashes like prices at Walmart on Black Friday," raved a landlocked Wasatch couloir fiend. "Lickety split edge-to-edge," commented a hard-to-please Colorado tester, appreciative of the spooned nose's ability to roll in and out of turns, although he did call the tail "squirrely" when landing.

Tester's biggest gripe? The update is one size only. That said, Jones often adds lengths after a limited release.

JONESSNOWBOARDS.COM | $950
3,100g | 152

ROSSIGNOL
ESCAPER SPLIT

As splitboards become more expensive, budget rides like the Escaper look appealing. “A decent intro split for someone looking for a lightweight deck that leaves pocket change for tailgate beers … or avalanche courses,” a thrifty rider said. A directional twin-tip shape was comfortable for testers, though Rossignol’s reverse flex—stiffer under the front foot than the back—took some getting used to and had less pop than testers expected. “It really forces you to steer front foot heavy and jump off the bolts,” a tester explained. Not everyone was enamored: Testers found the Escaper has a definite speed limit and that advanced riders would push beyond its limits quickly. “All it does is carve,” said one looking for more pep in his step. But it also offers the chance to discover your limits without overdrafting your account.

ROSSIGNOL.COM | $550
3,650g (157) | 149, 153, 157, 161, 161W

$

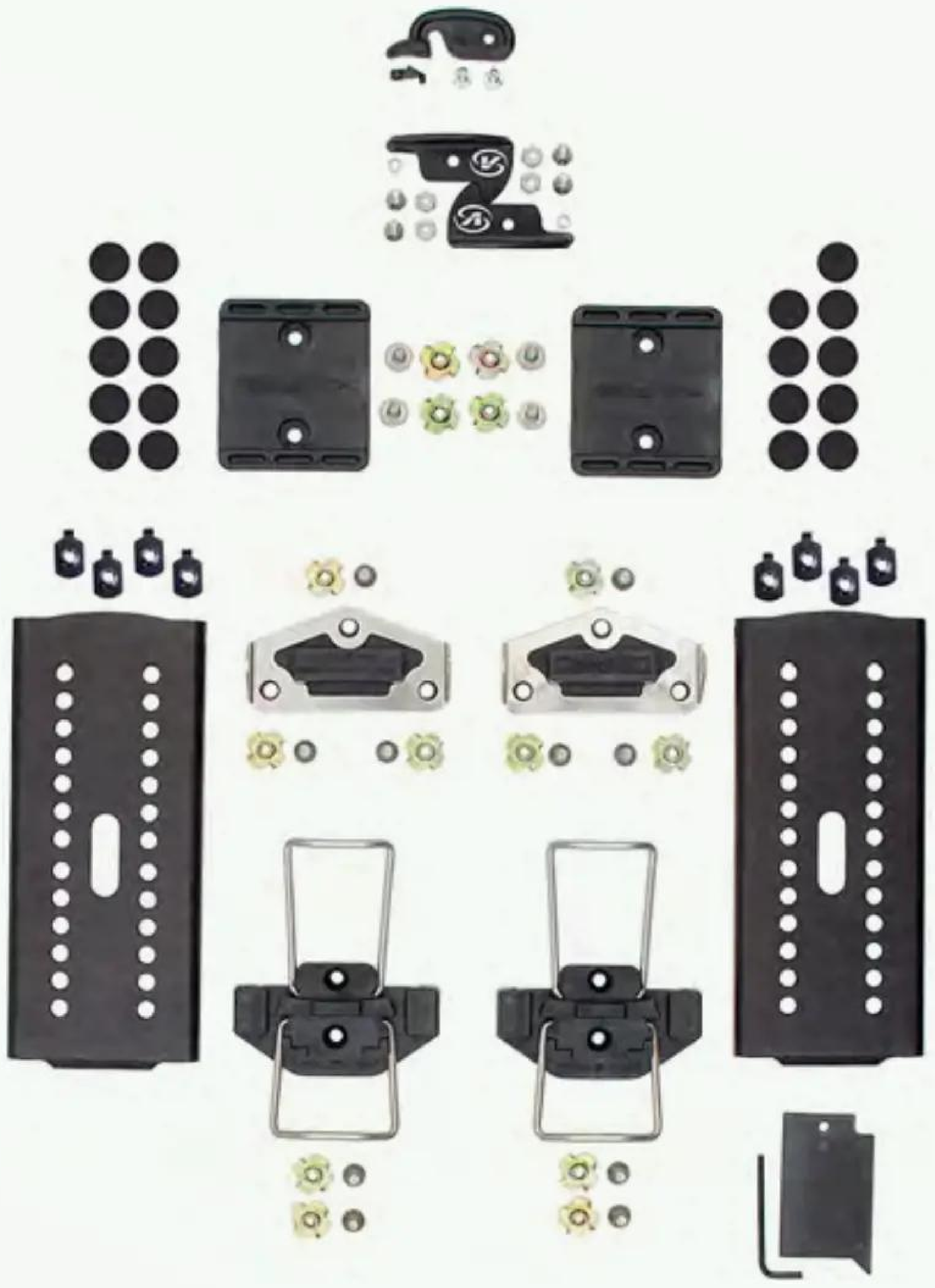
VENTURE
EUPHORIA

The Euphoria has long been iconic for its topsheets, not to mention its ability to float and carve effortlessly. This year’s redesign has a trimmed waist and rounded tail, leaning into the Euphoria’s pow-wiggler side. “It’s good for playful riders who live in Powder Town,” one Sierra tester said. With a floppy, honkin’ nose reminiscent of Squidward’s, the Euphoria crests riffles like a spawning-bound salmon, testers said, though they found it more difficult to set on edge than in years past. “Slower to get into the sidecut,” a Tahoe-carving afficionado said, “but holds a great edge when you get there.” Like all Venture boards, it has the flat-underfoot Straight-Line Rocker, which threads the needle between surfy and capable. Plus, the topsheet is yet again the best in the game. A stylish Wasatch sender found it, “Flashy, fun and cool.”

VENTURESNOWBOARDS.COM | $999
3,510g (156) | 150, 156, 162

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
THE VOILÉ SPLIT KIT

The tech that shifted things was the Voilé Split Kit tools and materials list indicated this was carpentry. Circular saw. Countersink bit. T-nuts. Epoxy. Clamps and workbench encouraged. Sparks flew when you severed the edge of a solid board. *Zzzzt.* Clips, hooks, touring brackets, pucks, each one a careful process of drill, countersink, epoxy. Repeat for each T-nut or rivet, 30 total. Forget insert packs: You better hope you nailed the stance. It was as permanent as your middle school record. Skiers had Ramers and AT bindings; riders had snowshoes until Wally Wariakois set us free. My first DIY split was a Ride Fleetwood 158 with a slight dogleg on the inside cut, a reminder that our backcountry access was not bought but made. I don’t miss those days. Splitboards are mainstream, and my quiver features factory-made, conditions-specific decks. More fun, more capable. But, I wonder, would riders have dreamed of today’s riches without the Split Kit to start things off? *—Tom Hallberg, Managing Editor, 2021-2024*



ROSSIGNOL

XV SPLIT

Our relationship with Rossignol's XV started off steamier than a French romance. It's a stout, cambered freeride blade with stiffness centered over the front foot—Xavier De Le Rue's preferred flex for screaming descents. "Stomps landings perfectly," reported a Chamonix regular who dug the board's reliable tail and versatile, multi-radius sidecut, judging the deck ideal for alpine terrain and couloirs. "This board rips in steep terrain. It's maneuverable at speed and even more so in slow, tech situations," agreed a California splitboard guide who thrashed this all spring long in the demanding Eastern Sierra. He loved the nostalgia-inducing stiffness, energetic ollie power, capable directional shape and lightweight build for big days. The XV was subsequently a frontrunner for Editors' Choice honors. However, our romance crumbled as extended testing gave way to delamination, construction woes and issues with cheapo clips.

ROSSIGNOL.COM | $850
3,450g (159) | 156, 158W, 159, 161W, 162, 165W

VENTURE
STORM 157

VENTURE

STORM

"Get ready for more airtime than Trump will get this election cycle," a Colorado huckster said about the Storm. A freeride soul caught in a powder board, the Storm's ample nose, 9 millimeters of taper and marathon runner's trim waist achieve "a wiggly, giggly good time," a Wasatch pow princess said. Its strong tail and surprising pop, given its flat camber, make it ideal for playful spinning, buttering and jumping. Triaxial fiberglass adds longitudinal stiffness while maintaining torsional flexibility, per Venture. Or as one tester put it, "Quick and easy turns, but doesn't wash out." Like current politics, the Storm was polarizing. Some testers found a speed and terrain limit, with one commenting, "She can lose some stability if you rail her too hard." However, a few enamored dudes with a predilection for freestyle were ready to sell all their splits to buy this one.

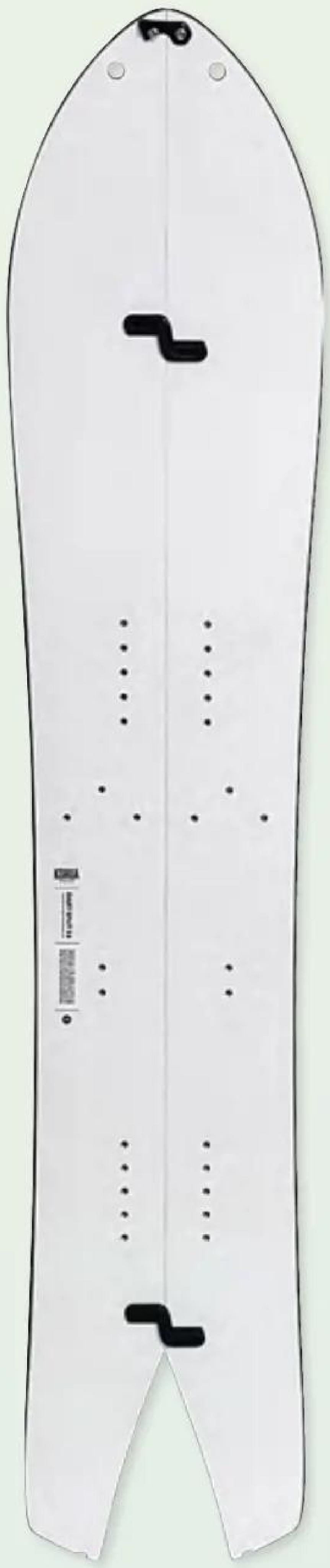
VENTURESNOWBOARDS.COM | $999
3,420g (157) | 152, 157, 162, 167

NEVER SUMMER

NOKHU SPLIT

The Nokhu features a blunted deck with a triple-camber profile (two camber pockets under the inserts and one between the feet with rocker between). It's smooth, poppy, playful flex is thanks to pre-tensioned and bi-lite fiberglass, a CNC-milled hybrid wood core, two carbon Vs running from the inserts to the nose and tail, and a carbon X between the feet. "The camber locks into hardpack and generates ollie power, but you can also seesaw and press the deck easily because of the rocker sections," commented an all-mountain board nerd. "Unreal butters on the squared, kicked nose and tail, which float in powder and can handle switch stomping and shredding, too." A French ripper appreciated the turning prowess of the mid-sized, multi-radial sidecut, adding, "Great carver, but it wants to play." That said, a heavier rider accustomed to classic camber profiles reported washing out on turns.

NEVERSUMMER.COM | $1,120
3,356g (159) | 155, 159



KORUA SHAPES

DART SPLIT

"If it's got a white topsheet and red base, safe bet it rails," commented a Tahoe splitboarder ready to go all-in on the Dart, a wide swallowtail emblematic of Korua's dedication to carving. The 156 sports an elephantine 32-centimeter-wide nose, portly 26.8-centimeter waist, significant taper, setback, backseat camber and an 8.2-meter sidecut—a combo testers claimed delivers excellent float and on-rail performance. "Most dynamic turning board of the test. The flex is supportive without slowing down edge-to-edge transitions, and the edge hold is great at all speeds," commented an Eastern Sierra splitboard guide. More testers shouted out Korua's go-to construction—biaxial fiberglass over a poplar core—which keeps the ride damp and the price swallowable. "Absorbs landings and dampens bumps," voiced a Nevada test veteran. Finally, testers dug camber underfoot while skinning, but wanted to ditch flimsy clips on choppy descents.

KORUASHAPES.COM | $849
3,300g (156) | 156, 162

VOILÉ
SPARTAN

"The cheapest fun you'll have on a splitboard," a surprised tester said. Voilé's affordable old standby—a poplar-cored, cap-constructed (no sidewalls), narrow-waisted rocket—is a blast in the right conditions. "This board doesn't look like anything special, but its simplicity gives you everything you need," proclaimed a rider from Voilé's Wasatch homeland. Two layers of triaxial fiberglass lend stiffness, while rubber foil inlaid over the edges gives "surprising edge hold for cap construction," one freerider said. The lack of sidewalls limits the Spartan in variable snow, testers found, but on smooth surfaces like corn and pow, the twin-tip with camber underfoot and a bit of tip and tail rocker was recognizable and predictable to riders of all styles. "I jump and butter often, so I loved the balance of play and power and control," one concluded.

VOILE.COM | $650
3,292g (158) | 149, 154, 158, 162, 166

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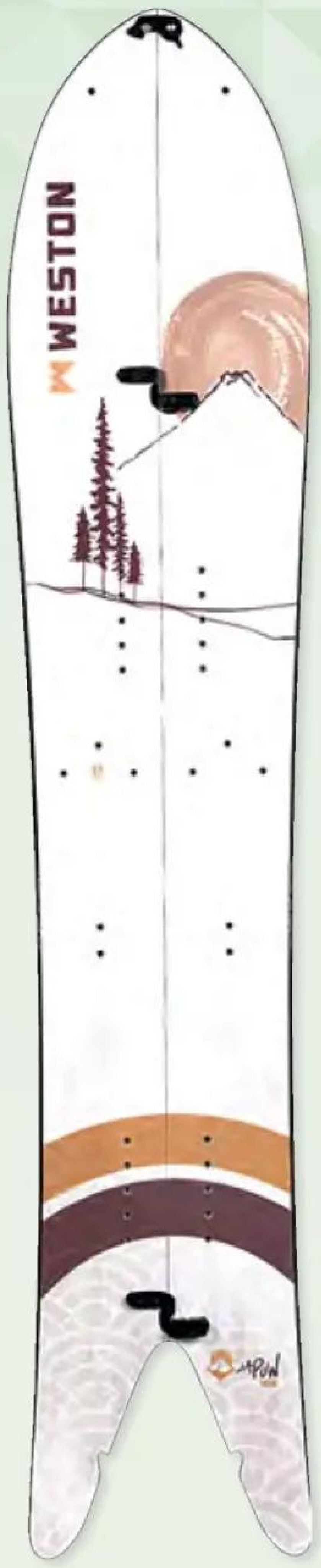

WESTON
JAPOW SPLIT

When a Colorado tester who owns—and loves—an older Japow hopped on this year's split, his response was telling. "Wish I could trade mine in for this one!" he exclaimed. Why? He felt the overall flex on Weston's flagship freeride swallowtail was a touch softer this year, and he loved the "flexy, snappy and supportive" edge-to-edge pliability provided by the 91% poplar/9% bamboo core. That said, while the Japow still has a pair of carbon stringers reinforcing the prongs of the swallowtail, he did find this year's landing gear less reliable. A small rider offered a different perspective: "Swallowtails aren't ideal for dropping cliffs or clocking airtime, but the Japow remains more reliable than most in the category." Both agreed the deck performed best darting through powder or arcing through smooth snow, thanks to the tapered directional shape and carvable progressive sidecut.

WESTONBACKCOUNTRY.COM | $949
3,270g (159) | 154, 159, 164, 169

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
SPLITBOOT WALK MODES

What's walk mode? Mission critical, that's what. Jokes aside, walk mode increases rearward range of motion of a boot or binding, facilitating more efficient skintrack strides. The first split bindings with walk mode can be traced back to Spark's 2010 Blaze, which sported a highback that tilted backward 5 degrees. Shortly after, Karakoram debuted twistable forward lean adjustors, enabling quicker walk mode deployment. In 2015, Spark introduced flickable forward lean adjustors to expedite walk mode—still the gold standard according to our testers. Soft boot walk mode has been a trickier problem. A splitboot should pivot at the ankle like an AT boot, but it's near impossible using anything but plastic. Still, we've seen important steps recently, like ThirtyTwo's MTB, Salomon's Trek S/Lab and K2's Waive, all of which use Boa dials to free up the calf when touring. My advice? Pair boots and bindings that each have a walk mode to enhance your backcountry experience. And if you demand uphill efficiency overall? Easy: embrace hardboots.

—Drew Zieff, Splitboard Test Director and Rider in Chief, 2016-Present

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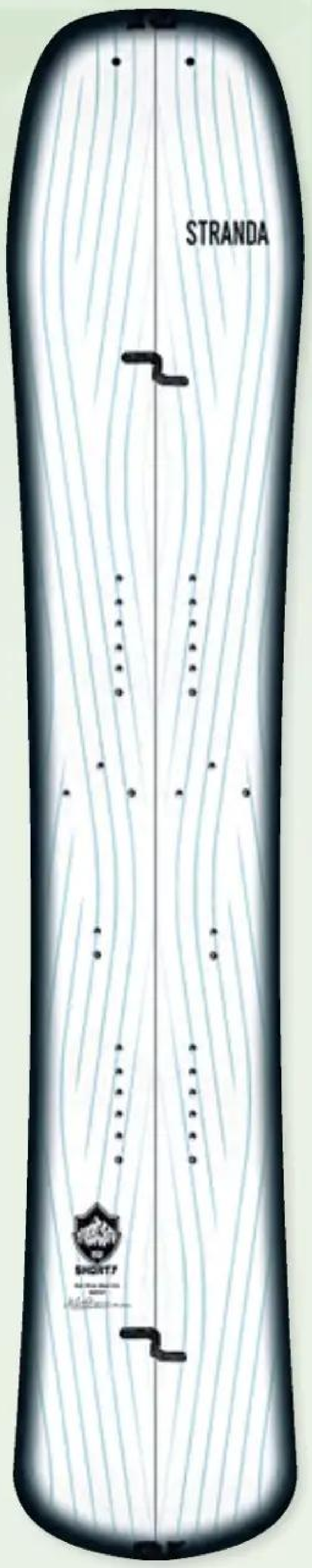

STRANDA

SHORTY BACKCOUNTRY

After a Tahoe tester rode the Shorty on a Scandinavian hut trip last year, he reported, “It’s got cruise control.” This sentiment was shared by PowMow testers thanks to a lengthy, rockered nose (lighter this year due to new paulownia inserts), short, maneuverable tail and an approachable flex pattern from an ash and poplar core. “Dads rejoice—this split makes carving fun again,” joked a Colorado all-mountain rider. A Nevada dad did in fact rejoice: “It can handle quick turns due to the flexible torso, and medium-to-large turns due to the sidecut.” He loved the proud prow of a nose in pow, too. However, some heavier or harder chargers overpowered the shape. “Soft tip to tail, washes out easily,” judged an aggressive Wasatch splitter, although he still called it “a great option for intermediate riders or those looking for a soft powder board.”

STRANDASNOWBOARDS.COM | $990
3,250g (159) | 153, 159, 164, 164W, 169

WESTON
RANGE

WESTON

RANGE SPLIT

“When I describe a snowboard to an alien, it will look like this,” a Teton raconteur said. A directional twin with camber underfoot, its shape and style were instantly relatable to all riders. “More freestyle than freeride, but more than enough board anywhere,” a smitten Sierraite said. Want to ride switch? It’s not tapered, so go ahead. Want to drop cliffs? With a core made of poplar, paulownia and bamboo (and two lengthwise carbon stringers) it’s got you. Do you ride pow one day and hardpack the next? It’s capable in both, testers say. What’s the drawback, you ask? “It’s relegated to doing all OK, but excelling at nothing,” a longtime tester concluded. Still, if you lack a trust fund or high-grade pro deals to pad a quiver, that testing veteran said, “It’s a daily driver in all but the deepest pow.”

WESTONBACKCOUNTRY.COM | $749
3,200g (158) | 155, 158, 158W, 161W, 164W

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VOILÉ

SKYLINE

“Carbon? It can’t be!” joked a Tahoe all-mountain rider. Voilé’s blunt Skyline sandwiches a light paulownia core between dual layers of carbon fiber. Combined with TPU sidewalls and shock-absorbing rubber foil lining the edges, the wide ride is heavier and damper than expected. “It gobbles up fall line descents and airtime alike,” reported a Tahoe tester. An Eastern Sierra split guide agreed: “The tail bails you out of landings, and the underfoot camber offers ollie energy at any speed—trust and send!” He also appreciated balanced and easy kickturns, the longer sidecut’s aptitude for alpine terrain and Voilé’s “best-in-class” camming clips, which provide unrivaled downhill integrity. The Skyline is beefy—the 158 has a nearly 27-centimeter waist—leading a few testers to call the deck “planky.” A Tahoe snowboard shop buyer who declared the Skyline a “one-board quiver” subsequently recommended sizing down.

VOILE.COM | $950
3,181g (158) | 146, 150, 154, 158, 162, 166, 172

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WESTON

RISE SPLIT

The women’s analogue to the Range, the Rise is as standard a snowboard as you’ll find. Camber underfoot with rockered tip and tail and a directional, true-twin shape made it familiar to all testers. “The rocker-camber profile made for jumping, popping and stomping in all-mountain pow,” a Wastach lady said. Like most Westons, it has a poplar/paulownia core with a hint of bamboo for added pop and carbon stringers for longitudinal stiffness. Weston rates it a 6/10 flex, but our lady shredders were split on that judgment. “A beginner or more playful rider would enjoy a softer ride,” one said. Another disagreed, calling it a “noodle.” What they all agreed on was the Rise’s wheelhouse: playful, low-speed, shorter turns and dynamic, jibby terrain with soft snow. Otherwise, one said, “It loses stability when faced with chop and chunder.”

WESTONBACKCOUNTRY.COM | $749
2,850g (152) | 143, 146, 149, 152

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PALLAS SNOWBOARDS
EPIPHANY (ALPINE SERIES)

For an upcharge, Pallas' Epiphany Alpine Series is a supercharged edition of last year's Editors' Choice-winning Epiphany—a blunt-nosed, moon-tailed, women's-specific daily driver. The hard-boot friendly upgrade includes extra touring inserts compatible with ski tech toes sans adaptors. The premium build weighs similarly, but it also boasts damper, ultra-high molecular weight inner edges (tech borrowed from Pallas' brother company, Chimera), carbon stringers for torsional rigidity and pop, and a faster graphite-infused base. "It requires muscle to make tight turns, but it's easy to open up big carves at speed, and it handled variable snow like a freight train," commented a Sierra shredder, recommending the deck as a "quiver-killer for strong, big-mountain riders who appreciate stability." A more intermediate rider found this version "difficult to drive, like a big truck, more at home on open country roads than tight, tree-lined city streets."

PALLASSNOWBOARDS.COM | $999
2,815g (151) | 151, 155

♀

CHIMERA BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDS
SHOP RAT (GUIDE SERIES)

The Shop Rat lives in a beautiful love story. "It's like a park board and a swallowtail had a baby," a tester said. With 27 millimeters of taper, a surprisingly long 8.9-meter turn radius and a clever flat camber-nose rocker profile with a small camber pocket under the rear foot for control, testers found the Shop Rat Guide Series to be surprisingly stable and poppy for such a flexible board. "Quick and schmoowy, rips in a playful way," said a Chimera convert. "Soft flex, long sidecut makes it more versatile." Vertically laminated aluminum stringers in the aspen/poplar core are meant to offset any pinginess associated with the carbon layup, though some bigger riders said it had trouble damping in choppy snow. As one tester summed up, though, "You can ride this from the summit to the street rail."

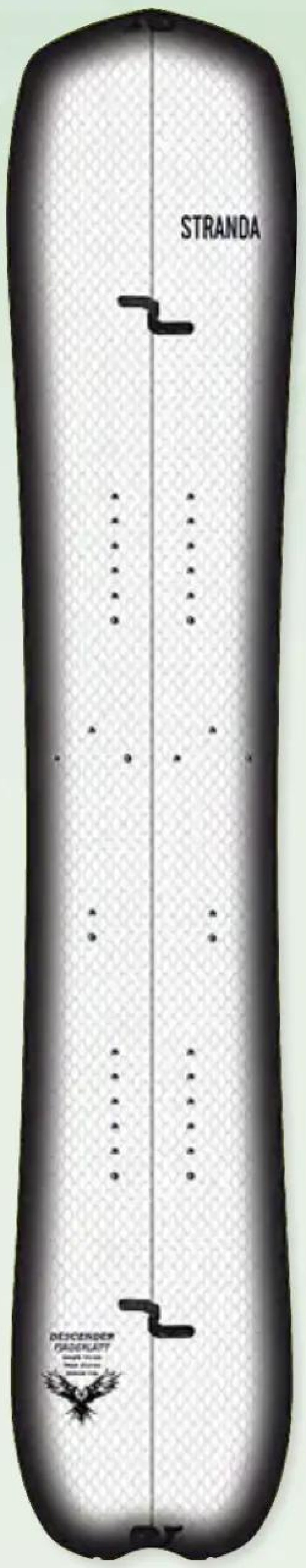
CHIMERASNOWBOARDS.COM | $975
2,805g | 155

30 YEARS OF GEAR:
SPARK R&D IGNITION BINDING

The paradigm shift was always the bindings for me. The day that the first prototypes for Spark R&D's binding showed up was what took splitboarding from feeling like this fairly Frankenstein-y thing to actually starting to have gear developed with intent for backcountry. I still remember pulling those things out.

Previously, you had this slider track mounted on plastic pucks and your full resort snowboard binding on top of that. So you were multiple layers removed from the deck. I still had plenty of life altering face shots on that set up, but trying to tour uphill wasn't optimal. You had no articulation. The bindings were essentially a door hinge.

The initial Spark was a binding with the slider track built into the base of the binding itself. It removed the separate plate by just machining a base plate to suit. That was when the next phase of splitboarding started for me. —*As told by Mike Horn, Editor, Board Test Director, Rider in Chief, 2006-2023*



STRANDA
DESCENDER FJÄDERLÄTT

If you want to take a board to a black metal show in a crumbling warehouse, look no further. "It's a very robust ride unless you're an equally robust rider," one of our strongest testers said. A carbon and triaxial fiberglass layup over a paulownia core with aluminum stringers and ash reinforcements added up to Gear Test's stiffest ride. "Ready to go 100 mph, but not fun at low speed," an alpine wizard said. Its stiffness and the extra Power Bump contact points at the inserts gave it supreme edge hold in dicey places. "I loved this board in the alpine and hated it in low-angle, tighter terrain," the same muscular rider said. If you're ready to strap on chains and leather on a high-consequence face, you won't find a more capable deck, testers say, just don't wiggle in the apron.

STRANDASNOWBOARDS.COM | $1,490
2,790g (161) | 161, 162W, 166W

KORUA SHAPES
ESCALATOR SPLIT PLUS

Like a carbon-scaled needlefish, the Escalator is featherweight, sharp-nosed and built for speed. "The spear-like nose is narrow enough to fit in slim skintracks—perfect for keeping up with skimo buddies," commented a part-time hardbooter. "Light, efficient, good for multi-day tours," agreed a Chamonix shredder. Compared to Korua's standard white-topped decks, the pricier, carbon-constructed "Plus" boards are lighter, more reactive and faster due to a higher-grade sintered base. Testers were mixed on the build's downhill performance. "Stiff but light and agile in pow. Once it hit hardpack, it took more effort edge-to-edge," commented a Nevada endurance athlete. A Wasatch lady on the 152 disagreed: "This board did everything. It paints a beautiful canvas in pow fields but has your back on sketchy exits." Given uphill aptitude and downhill reactivity, a Cascades tester offered, "Best for ultralight weight weenies riding smooth snow."

KORUASHAPES.COM | $1,199
2,650g (162) | 152, 157, 162

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TELOS
LEMURIAN CARBON 154

TELOS SNOWBOARDS
LEMURIAN CARBON SPLITBOARD

Our testers can't confirm the legitimacy of the Lemurians. However, if you're planning to shred Shasta, our gnarcheaologists attest to the freeride legitimacy of Telos' ultralight Lemurian Carbon. Thanks to a sandwich of carbon fiber around the paulownia core, the 154 weighs just 2,600 grams. "Great uphill—light, stiff, low swing weight," reported a hefty, hard-charging Wasatch skintrack regular. On the descent, he felt the Lemurian performed best at speed and on edge. He especially loved the grip of the mid-wide directional deck's setback camber profile and mid-length sidecut, calling it a "purpose-built aggressive big mountain rig." While Telos damped the carbon build with D30 foam inserts and nose-to-tail aluminum stringers, a cruisier Colorado tester summed up thoughts of lighter, more laidback riders, judging the ride "stiffer than your casino-loving grandma's martini."

TELOSSNOWBOARDS.COM | $1,330
2,600g | 154

BURTON
UNISEX FISH 3D SPLIT

Burton's iconic deck comes to the skintrack with a convex 3-D tip and tail (think boat-hull shaped). "Rolled edge to edge as smoothly as an otter playing with a clam," said a shred captain. A big nose, small tail, wide waist and soft flex add up to easy turns and capable float. "The torsional flex was uber satisfying, but it still had the stability and hold to make meaningful, almost hand-to-the-ground carves," said a rider from Vermont, Burton's home state. Those qualities, however, limited its utility in crud and firm snow. "It had more pop than I expected," a Sierra lady said, "but the landing gear got squirrely in chunder." With a techy, double swallowtail design, the Fish gives off surfboard vibes in soft snow, leading one tester to say it's "meant for dominators of the white wave."

BURTON.COM | $1,000
N/A | 146, 151, 156

♀

STRANDA
THIRTY YEARS
2025
EDITORS' CHOICE
BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE

ARE YOU READY TO MEET THE BIRU?

Biru means "devil" in the native Sámi language and is hailed as one of the best-designed snowboards in recent years. It was born from a vision to merge a full camber, great-to-carve, volume-shifted snowboard with significant freestyle DNA. It has been tested and recognized as one of the best snowboards of 2024 by *Outside Magazine* and *Men's Journal*. So, we were pretty sure it would make one hell of a splitboard.

A big shout-out to all the testers at *Backcountry Magazine* for taking the time to evaluate this little red devil and awarding it an "Editors Choice".

Thank you guys!

STRANDA
www.strandasnowboards.com
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SPLITBOARD BOOTS

PALAU
disr
up
tive
dis'rəptiv
KEY EQUIPMENT

KEY EQUIPMENT

DISRUPTIVE

Like King Arthur, hardboot splitboarders have longed searched for the Holy Grail: something that tours like a ski boot but descends like a softboot. And, like the taunting Frenchman in Monty Python's Arthurian flick, Key Equipment has "already got one." At least, according to one longtime Disruptive user. "Surfy, dependable at speed and in steeps, responsive, not overly stiff," he said. "Key Equipment has figured out the formula."

With a separate lower and upper, the Disruptive features "low-friction pivoting upper cuffs," per Key Equipment. "I'd vouch for that description," our tester said. Though he admits it's far better than any softboot, he added, "My biggest complaint is the limited range of motion in tour mode. Then I'd grouse a bit about the weight." The Disruptives are heavier than most DIY hardboots, but our tester admitted, "They're lighter than my ultrastiff softboots and more fun than cut-up TLT 6s."

Because the boots are modular, our tester replaced his clapped cuffs and got a new stock liner after spending three years on the Disruptives. "Good as new," he said. "The original Palau liner lost its plushness quickly, but they're back to being warm and stiff."

The flex is designed to mirror a medium-stiffness softboot setup, but Key Equipment offers stiffer tongues to dial in a more aggressive boot. "Where the Disruptives really shine is the lateral flex," he said. "Other hardboots, especially DIY ones, are impossible to make small pressure adjustments in, which limits them for freestyle or in slow, tight terrain. These perform as close to softboots as it gets."

KEY-EQUIPMENT.COM | $699 | 2,510g | 23.5-31

thirtytwo
Vibram

THIRTYTWO

JONES MTB BOA

Historically, testers have beefed with the beefy MTB. This year, though, ThirtyTwo revamped the MTB and complaints shrank like a glacier during a heat dome. According to a Sierra guide who's thrashed MTBs over the years, the update gives freeriders unparalleled traction, extra comfort, a lighter build and reliable lacing. "I'd buy a pair now," he offered, calling them "one of the best softboot options on the market for progressing freeriders."

The crampon-compatible Vibram outsole is a touch lighter than previous years and it's still reliable while scrambling rocky ridges. The stiff, rubber-wrapped toe is as good as softboots get at kicking steps, leading our tester to joke, "The reinforced toe and dedicated heel welt will be there for you as you progress through your AMGA course." ThirtyTwo updated the walk mode collar, too, to which our Sierra correspondent reported, "Pop the upper Boa, unzip the sleeve and you've got a pretty solid walk mode with no bells and whistles."

Boa's been a common sticking point in the past, but this year? Not so much. "No issues," our tester reported, speaking to the durability of the MTB's TX3 lace. He also appreciated the repurposable eyelets—a plan B if the Boa blows out: "Knowing you can run a lace if things get weird goes a long way."

On the descent, he noted, "Heel hold is above average for a splitboard boot, and they're stiff without being punishing." Early starts got easier thanks to incredibly smooth entry and exit, "like putting on slippers," the tester gushed. His sole complaint? The gaiter turned the boot swampy on warmer days.

THIRTYTWO.COM | $700 | N/A | 6-13

SPLITBOARD BOOTS

BURTON

MEN'S PHOTON STEP ON BOOT

Our tester thought the Photons—one half of Burton's Step On Split setup—were comfy and soft enough for touring without any walk-mode features. "Very surfy and playful, but not dependable at speed or in consequential terrain," he said. The two-dial Sequence Boa Fit system evenly adjusted the boots, and the leather outer strap across the instep provided some stiffness. "No cooking needed for comfort on the Imprint 3 liner, the reflective foil inside the shell kept my feet toasty, and the Vibram Ecostep sole was plenty burly for bootpacking," he said. Burton bills these as between medium and aggressively stiff, but our slim, 150-pound tester quickly maxed out the flex. "If I spent most of my time buttering and popping off mellow pillows, the Photons would be enough," he said, "but they would be limiting otherwise."

BURTON.COM | $480 | N/A | 7-15

DEELUXE

SPARK XV

Love big couloirs? Hate Big Boa? Feast your feet on Deeluxe's Spark XV. "Amazing, 10/10 low-profile lacing, and the walk mode is operated by just one strap," commented a Wasatch skin-track crusher, loving the sleek placement of the pull-tab lacing compared to boots with protruding Boa knobs. He appreciated the stout lateral flex, especially while digging edges into crispy skinners. "Walk mode is good. Not hardboot good, but as good as a softboot gets." He judged the crampon-compatible Vibram sole scramble-worthy, yet noted it didn't add too much bulk or sacrifice ride feel. Most impressively, he reported that the Spark XV is both comfortable out of the box and built to last. "You can ride all day in new ones, no problem. But they're also durable, waterproof and tough—I have a pair from last year and they're still in good condition."

DEELUXE.COM | $409 | 2,560g | 23-31

$

THIRTYTWO

TM-2 DOUBLE BOA WOMEN'S

The long-running TM-2 Boa Women's was, to our tester, a beefy, stiff option for locked-in riding. "You will forget where the board ends and where your legs begin," she said. A dual-density foam Intuition liner, hard plastic Performance Back Stay and 3-D molded tongue create the 7/10 flex, per ThirtyTwo. Two Boas easily dialed in the fit, she said, but the clip on the harness that secures the liner locked before it was pulled fully tight. "I could never really get this internal system tight enough," she said, which led to heel lift. Muddy spring bootpacks were no match for the rubber outsole, and the roomy toebox helped with her Reynaud's. In conclusion, she said, "A rider who wants something stiff and solid will appreciate these, especially if they prefer the ease of a Boa lacing system."

THIRTYTWO.COM | $440 | N/A | 5-10 W

♀

THIRTYTWO

TM-2 JONES

If you split time between splitting and resort riding and are searching for a single pair of do-it-all boots, ThirtyTwo's TM-2 Jones compromises between uphill needs and downhill wants. The ridge-scrambling Vibram outsole and step-kicking capped toe are the same as ThirtyTwo's stiffer, mountaineering-focused MTB. "Extremely good traction for rock walking, and the hard plastic crampon welts are welcome bootpacking," commented a Tahoe backcountry regular. He gave props to the Power Strap, which locks the calf in place in ride mode and releases for more range of motion when skinning. When descending in or out of bounds, he appreciated the mid-stiff flex (compared to the extra-stiff MTB). "Great for touring or inbounds freeriding," he affirmed. He was also impressed with the out-of-the-box comfort, but docked the TM2 for bulkiness and heaviness, especially compared to his standard freeride boots.

THIRTYTWO.COM | $440 | N/A | 6-13

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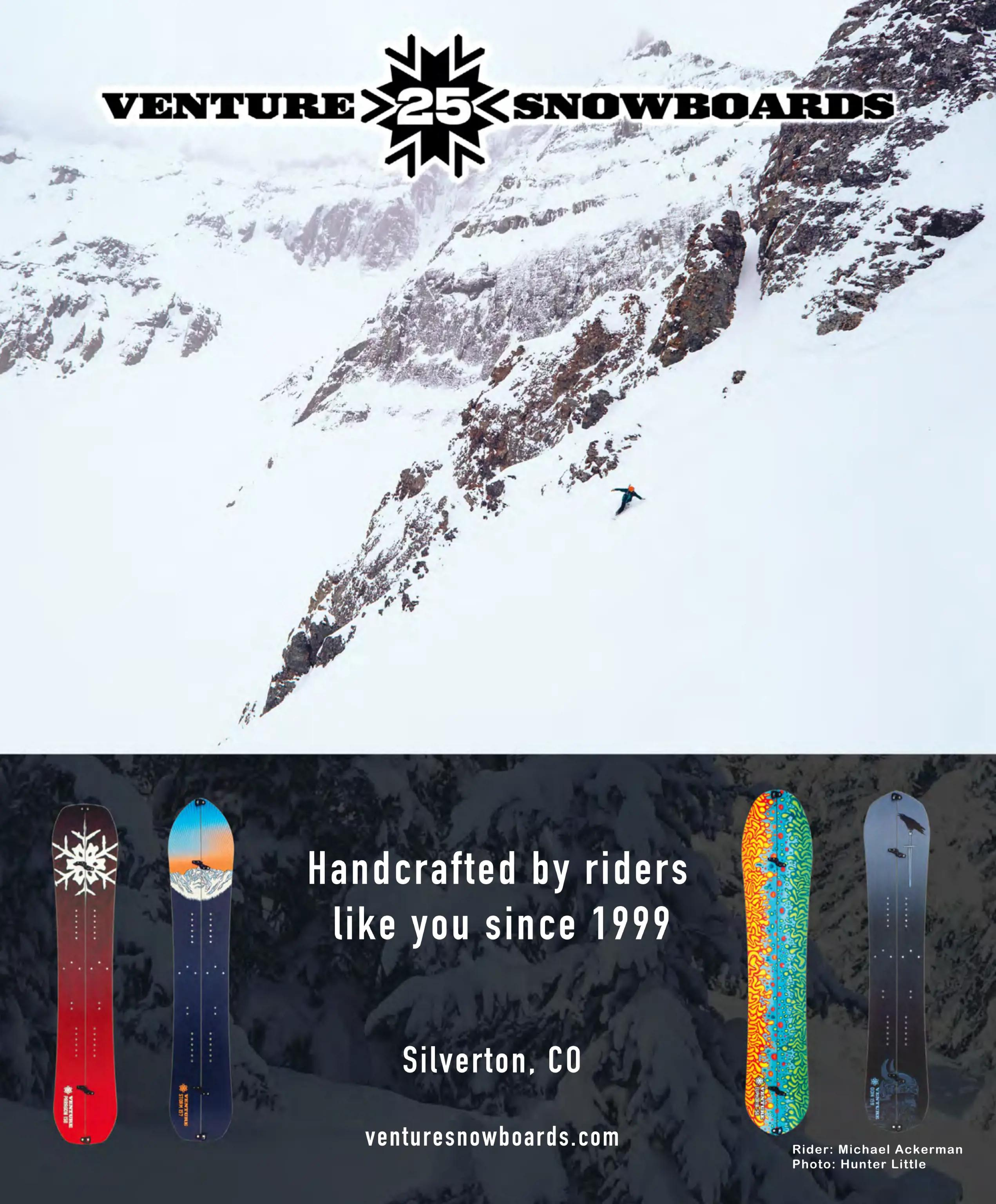
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Photo: Hunter Little

SPLITBOARD BINDINGS

EDITORS'
CHOICE
BINDINGS

SPARK R&D

SURGE ST

Nothing rains on a powder parade like busted bindings. Are you're a full-throttle freerider who's tough on your equipment? A tester who breaks things recommends checking out Spark's Surge ST, the Bozeman binding titan's stiffest and most durable option.

"I'm really hard on my gear, and I've broken several pairs of split bindings," lamented a Teton tester. "These hold up better than any pair I've had." That durability comes from a solid metal baseplate, which is stiffer and tougher than the skeletal baseplate of the Arc ($459), the Surge's more approachable little brother. The Surge's asymmetrical highbacks are also more rigid and the ankle straps beefier. The resulting binding isn't just more durable—it's more responsive. "Great power transfer in committing terrain," raved our Teton tester, although he advises cruisy or playful riders to turn toward the Arc.

His biggest qualm? Minimal damping. Unsurprising, as Spark's baseplates are cushion-free. That said, you can upgrade with an aftermarket baseplate padding kit ($25). "The padding kit foam is firm enough that you don't lose noticeable power on the uphill, but you gain joint-saving suspension," recommended a Tahoe airtime addict.

As usual, Spark gets kudos for its straightforward puck interface, which testers found easy to install, operate and tweak as needed in the backcountry. Testers appreciated the recent ST (short for Smooth Touring) updates, a thermoplastic sheathing of touring bushings and risers. "The tech reduces friction on the ascent and makes it easier to flick your risers with your pole. Once you go ST, you can't go back," reported our Tahoe tester.

SPARKRANDD.COM | $489 | 1,378g | XS-L

PLUM

SOK

Chamonix-based Plum has brought Europe into the fray for the growing segment of weirdos forgoing softboots. "These have the best downhill performance of any hardboot binding I've tried," said our resident weirdo, who's on a yearslong quest to try all such equipment. "But they come with some serious drawbacks, too."

A machined aluminum baseplate and toe and heel bails make up the bones of the Sok, which uses a plastic screw on the toe for microadjustments. "The plastic ledge on the toe bail seats easily and securely," our Teton tester said.

The Sok stands out from other hardboot bindings in the attachment to the board. Six pieces and 10 screws create a two-piece mounting plate. "You need an engineering degree to set it up," our tester complained. Once set up, it uses a lever on the binding to clamp the plate, cinching together the splitboard halves.

"The ride quality is unparalleled and gave me a ton of confidence," our tester said. Another tester familiar with Plum's locking system said he struggled mightily with it on an Arctic sojourn, so ease-of-use results vary. The lever's plastic locking clip held up this spring, our Teton tester said, but it seems flimsy, so buy and carry a backup because the bindings can't work without it.

Boot sole length adjustability was simple, and Plum says the range is 270 to 330 millimeters. At 980 grams per pair plus the beefy mounting plate, they are perhaps the heaviest hardboot option out there, but the descent quality made our tester forget all about that.

FIXATION-PLUM.COM | $699 | 980g | O/S

BURTON
STEP ON SPLIT BINDING

Burton is bringing a modern twist on step-on bindings to the backcountry. Essentially a plastic-frame softboot binding without straps, the Step Ons require special Burton boots that have a heel clip and metal wings on the toe. “Better in theory than practice,” our tester said of the attachment system. “I had to stomp on them to get the heel clip to lock in.” He was surprised to find the bindings transferred lots of power to the board and damped well, despite the lack of straps, and he loved walking in them. “They eliminate pressure points you might get from the straps and feel smoother on the step than regular bindings,” he said. Given that they are heavier than many softboot bindings, he recommended them for riders looking for easy transitions in sidecountry terrain and those who already use Burton Step On boots inbounds.

BURTON.COM | $520 | N/A | S-L (M&W)

RIDE
A-BC

To avoid the expensive and time-consuming process of inventing a new splitboard interface, Ride worked with what’s already on the market for the A-BC. The chassis is borrowed from Voilé’s Speed Rail binding, but it sports Ride’s reversible ankle and toe-hugging straps, reliable ratchets and asymmetrical, mid-flexing nylon highbacks—all-mountain accoutrements you’ll find on Ride’s solid bindings. “I love the straps. You can customize your ankle flex by flipping the ankle straps, making these a great freestyle-ready binding,” commented a Wasatch splitter. He also dug the forward lean adjustor, which he called “easy to engage with mitts when transitioning between touring and downhill mode.” However, testers did have a major gripe. The Voilé interface utilizes unenclosed hooks to attach bindings to touring toe pieces, and bindings can pop free at inopportune times like precipitous transitions.

RIDESNOWBOARDS.COM | $460 | N/A | S-L

SPARK R&D
ARC ST

“When new splitboarders ask me about investing in their first bindings, I almost always point them to the Arc,” said a Tahoe tester who gets frequent gear questions in his DMs. Why? It’s (relatively) affordable. It’s reliable, thanks to an intuitive interface our testers continuously score the best. It’s also tougher than Spark’s lighter Arc ST Pro. But most of all, we’re fans of the ride. “They suit riders looking for agility and ease on the way up and down,” commented an East Coast tree wiggler. A Tahoe freestyler agreed, “I’d pick the Surges for no-fall zones, but the Arcs have more flexy baseplates and highbacks, enabling the surfy, playful cruising I prefer.” He did offer two warnings: Heavier shredders may appreciate the extra oomph of the Surge, and Spark’s bindings come without integrated cushioning. For more damping Spark offers an aftermarket baseplate padding kit ($25).

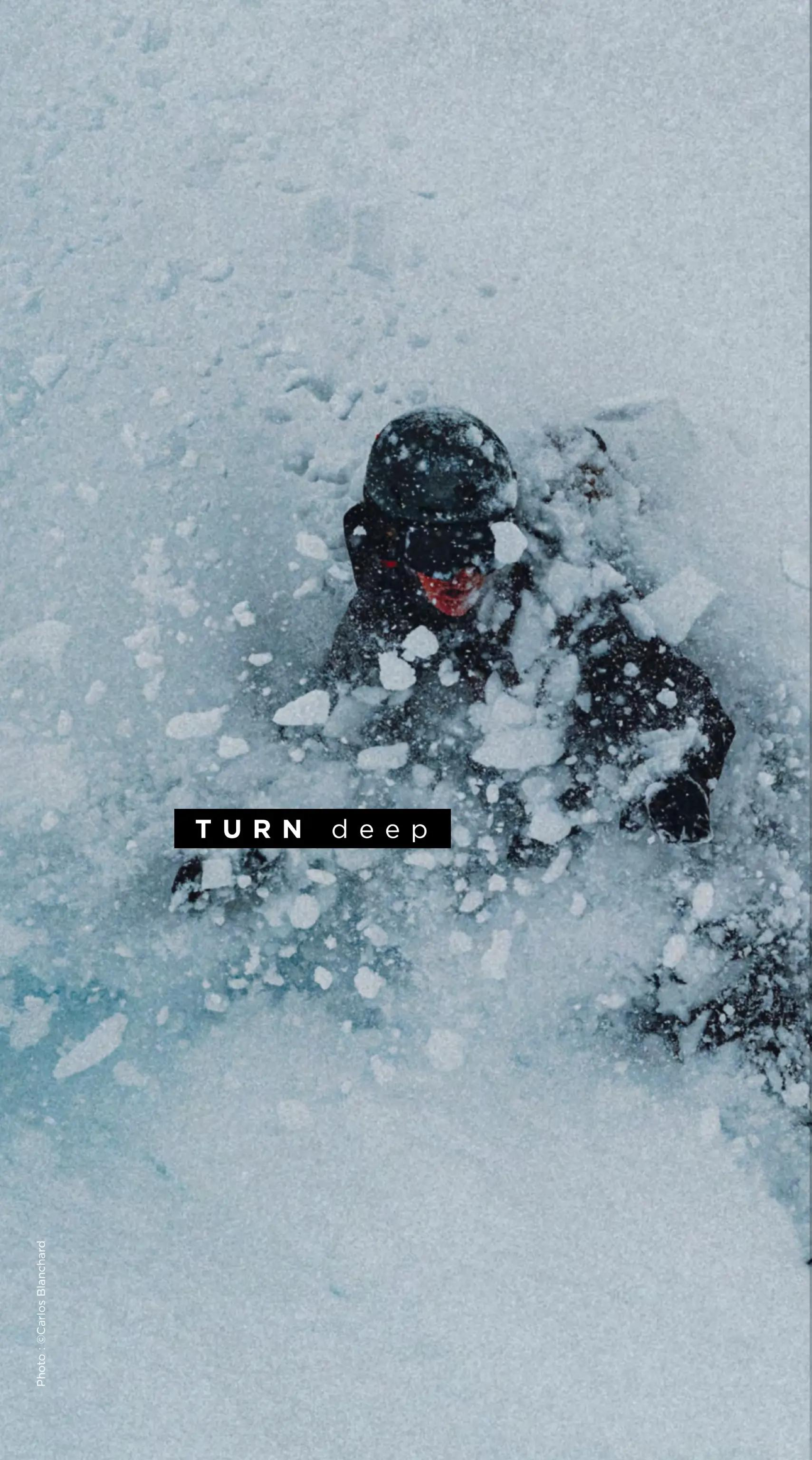
SPARKRANDD.COM | $459 | 1,256g | XS-L

VOILÉ
LIGHT SPEED

In *Star Wars*, traveling at light-speed was a hold onto your butts moment. Voilé’s aptly named binding is the Millennium Falcon of hyperspace riding. “Responsive and solid at all speeds, in all terrain, if a bit heavy,” one tester said. Unchanged for years, the Light Speed’s tempered steel chassis is durable, say testers who’ve ridden and bashed the Light Speed for seasons. Pin-free, the toe piece locks with a lever, and the double riser features a heel lock for dicey situations. “Easiest sidestepping and split skiing on the mountain,” a tester said. Voilé’s Ride-N-Stride highback flips easily between tour and ride mode, testers say, and the lever under the heel locks them securely on the pucks. “At this point, they’re more Padmé than Leia,” an experienced tester said, “but they’ve got it where it counts, kid.”

VOILE.COM | $375 | 1,500g | S-L

$


TURN deep
Photo : ©Carlos Blanchard

rossignol.com

GEAR GUIDE SELECT 2025 BACKCOUNTRY MAGAZINE

XV SPLIT

Built to take freeride further into the unknown, XDLR's signature splitboard retains the hard-charging characteristics to attack the biggest, boldest and most remote backcountry lines.

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MARMOT.COM/FEATURED/ORION

APPAREL

GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

We all love chasing cold smoke and staying dry while we do. For decades, we've donned apparel treated with carcinogenic fluorocarbons (PFCs/PFAs) to do just that. Known as forever chemicals, PFAs are defined by their virtually indestructible carbon and fluorine bond, whose high surface tension makes them durable and water repellent. It's why they've been the gold standard in waterproofing for decades. It's also why they linger in our environment centuries after their lifetime as a ski jacket.

In April, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced regulations on PFAs. Half the states adopted legislation restricting PFAs and five enacted phase-out bans on all PFAs in textiles. Some brands, like Picture Organic Clothing, had already transitioned to a plant-based waterproofing treatment, Teflon EcoElite, in 2017. Other brands are just now making the switch (look for Gore-Tex's new PFA-free membrane, ePE, and Patagonia's PFA-free H2No).

The result was our most eco-friendly apparel test ever. Modern science suggests a new PFA-free shell won't outlast your great grandkids generation. After six weeks of practically scientific testing, we suggest it will still do the trick for at least half your lifetime. *—Liam McGee*

116 Editors' Choice Hardshells
122 Select Shells
123 Select Pants
124 Puffies
126 Midlayers
128 Baselayers

Wind holds up high sent Ian Halderman, Alex Paul, Kelsey Colbert and ~~Harkin~~ Wylie Picotte to some low-elevation skintracks. Luckily, their kits are breathable and weather proof. **Iz La Motte**

FREE TOURING

HELLY HANSEN

VERGLAS INFINITY SHELL JACKET 2.0

“The fabric is breathable, durable and waterproof. I could wear this on the uphill when there was a breeze and still feel comfortable.” —Katie Botwin

A lightweight, affordable workhorse featuring Helly Hansen’s waterproof, breathable Lifa Infinity membrane, the three-layer Verglas suits four-season uphill athletes. Between breezy pit zips and the fabric itself, a Tahoe splitboarder reported, “I was able to comfortably wear this on the skintrack without heating up or sweating.” The harness-friendly fit and 100% polyester (half of which is recycled) face fabric’s noteworthy durability inspired multisport use. “Not an in-your-face ski jacket—it works well as a rain- and wind-proof jacket when hiking or mountaineering,” our splitboarder said. However, a few aspects limited touring efficacy, including front pockets blocked by backpack hip belts, a short waist and a hood that made the jacket ride up when wearing a helmet. Testers recommended sizing up—or trying the men’s model.

HELLYHANSEN.COM | $350 | S-XXL

♀ $

MARMOT

WOMEN’S GORE-TEX ORION PANT

“The combination of simplicity and durability makes it clear these pants are quality backcountry gear.” —Jerrica Lavooy

If you need ski pants with a laundry list of features, keep skinning. The Orion keeps it simple, pairing three-layer Gore-Tex C-Knit fabric with a no-frills design. The recycled fabric and waterproof zippers supply what one Wasatch splitboarder called “high-quality waterproofing.” Cordura cuffs ensure stray crampons won’t cramp your style. Beyond that, features are minimal: upper-thigh outer leg vents (you might wish they’re longer on spring tours), zippered thigh pockets our tester reported bunched when full, an adjustable waist and articulated knees. After the fabric itself, tailoring and overall fit were the major highlight. The Orion offered a “great, comfortable, slightly loose fit” for hiking and riding, per our tester, although she warned minimally flared legs fit tightly over snowboard boots.

MARMOT.COM | $400 | XS-XL

♀ $

THE APPAREL EQUIPPED FOR IN AND OUT OF BOUNDS.

With an emphasis on keeping you warm and dry, these jackets and pants prioritize weather proofness and durability to ensure you can enjoy endless deep powder and endure soggy chairlift rides.

EDITORS' CHOICE 2025

JONES

MEN'S SHRALPINIST GORE-TEX ePE RECYCLED JACKET

"Clearly designed by a snowboarder. There's actually enough room under this jacket for a layer or two and all your steez." —Will Sardinsky

The Shralpinist is the jacket for battering storm days, our tester says. Made with 40D Gore-Tex Pro Most Breathable fabric in the torso and 70D Gore-Tex Pro Most Rugged in the hood and arms, it strikes the right balance: "At the cost of being a bit stiff, it will block out wind and moisture, while still venting." Packed with features like big chest pockets, an effective powder skirt, interior stretch pouches for skins and smooth-sliding zippers, the Shralpinist had "all the features you want (other than hip pockets for me) and nothing extra," according to our tester. Though not quite as packable as other options, he said, it still "packs down small enough to always be worth having with you."

JONESSNOWBOARDS.COM | $800 | S-XL

PATAGONIA

M'S STORMSTRIDE PANTS

"If you don't run too cold, or you have puffy baselayers or pants for really cold days, these are all you need in life." —Tom Hallberg

"Plain but utilitarian. The Subaru Crosstrek of pants," our tester summarized. A stretchy, three-layer pant with Patagonia's H2No membrane, the Stormstride held up to high-output skintrack pursuits and semi-rainy chairlift laps. "The perfect combo of breathability, comfort, durability and watertightness," our tester said. Features are limited to a pair of thigh pockets that offer minimal storage space and vents on the outside of the legs; he found the stretchy beacon pocket hard to slip a large transceiver into but very secure. There were no qualms with the performance, but our former Hammer-pant-wearing snowboarder was surprised by how much he liked the slim cut. "The fit is great, and they move with you well."

PATAGONIA.COM | $449 | XS-XL

SPORT TOURING

PICT URE
xpore
GORE-TEX
MOUNTAIN HARD WEAR

PICTURE
ACIDIC 3L XPORE JACKET

“Overall this jacket was awesome! Plenty of pockets in the perfect locations and very versatile.” —Caitlyn Kelly

Picture sticks to its guns with the Xpore, which was gender fluid for those who like bright colors and ecofriendly, durable fabrics. “Joey-Gloewy! You’ll never get lost with this shell on,” said a Vermont lady who tested the men’s. Of the recycled polyester fabric with an Xpore waterproof membrane, she said, “The material is really nice and light yet durable.” Another tester in the women’s model agreed, calling it “perfect for skinning,” but “crunchy.” The pockets were simple, yet effective, both said, and the cuffs and helmet-compatible hood easily adjusted. Our Vermonter liked the baggy fit for wiggling and spinning, though she said the cut was “a tad short for my liking. Deep pow can shoot up there.” On this feature-rich jacket, Picture includes a removeable pow skirt for that exact scenario.

PICTURE-ORGANIC-CLOTHING.COM | $450 | XS-XL

♀

MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR
HIGH EXPOSURE GORE-TEX C-KNIT BIB

“The elastic beacon pocket was chef’s kiss. The pocket was articulated enough that the beacon sat comfortably on my thigh—not so low it gets whacked while skiing, or so high it gets in the way of your stride.” —Betsy Manero

Thanks to a thin, knitted backer laminated directly to the Gore-Tex membrane, C-knit technology purportedly boosts outerwear breathability and slashes weight by double-digit percents. Our tester didn’t prove those claims in the lab, but she co-signed the High Exposure Bibs after alpine analysis in the Tetons and Wasatch. “I loved the material. It was light enough to skin in, but still waterproof and windproof,” she reported. She recommended the pants for backcountry purists or resort-to-backcountry shredders, warning that chairlift diehards may overwhelm the featherweight fabric and suspect zippers. In addition to a faultless beacon pocket, she dug the bib’s chest pockets, finding them accessible through jacket pit zips, although midlayers made such rummaging more difficult.

MOUNTAINHARDWEAR.COM | $550 | XS-XL

♀

THESE KITS WANT TO LIVE IN THE BACKCOUNTRY ALL SEASON LONG.

Light and breathable while remaining poised to fight snow and wind, these jackets and pants aren't built to keep you cozy on the lift, but if you're moving, you'll be comfortable.

20 EDITORS' CHOICE 25

MAMMUT

HALDIGRAT AIR HS JACKET

"For general spring touring in the Sierra this jacket is my new go-to. For everything from light snow to wind to hot days, it's a great option. The hood/hat thing blew my mind." —John Lauer

"Lots of awesome going on here," raved a compact shredder. The awesome: a snug transceiver pocket, glove friendly cinch and zipper tabs and a mesh hood liner that fits around a ball cap (a "genius move," he added). Best of all, it's light (474 grams). "Awesome to have a three-layer, taped seams piece that protects you from the wind but doesn't call for immediate removal on the skintrack," this splitboarding fiend found. That performance is the result of a lightweight polyamide bonded fabric and Pertex Shield Air membrane which offers weatherproofness and breathability. The Haldigrat also has armpit vents and a handful of pockets—two backpack compatible on the chest, one on the sleeve, and mesh and zipped interior options. Our tester's one recommendation: size up for a little extra space for puffy loft.

MAMMUT.COM | $499 | S-XXL

FLYLOW

SMYTHE BIB

"A lightweight, stretchy bib that punches well above its weight as long as you can squeeze into the tighter fit." —Will Sardinski

Smythe Bib testers agreed on the top feature: Flylow's Intuitive PHD Stretch three-layer waterproof fabric. "It offers a lot of protection and durability for such a lightweight fabric," one said, while the other found it "stretches and breathes well." Simplistic, the Smythe has four slim pockets (chest, hip and two thigh), which both testers thought was enough storage, though one said the beacon pouch/attachment in the chest pocket was tight and uncomfortable. The thin fabric is well-suited for touring, both said, and the Smythe is just warm enough to be a crossover bib. However, they cautioned that the narrow cut works for tall, skinny folks, but weightlifters and other barrel-chested athletes should try them on first.

FLYLOWGEAR.COM | $475 | XS-XXL

SPEED TOURING

BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

FACTOR SHELL

“I used this jacket on 10-degree days with a puffy underneath, and as a raincoat on 40-degree days. I was surprised how well it performed across different conditions.” —Hazel Howard

The new Factor should captivate powderhounds like an orange OpenSnow forecast—although testers appreciated Black Diamond’s quieter colorways. The three-layer shell sandwiches a BD.dry waterproof, breathable membrane between two-way-stretch nylon and wool backing. The fabric isn’t impressing gram counters, but hard-charging front-to-backcountry skiers will dig the 30K/30K waterproof, breathability ratings. “On hotter days, it doesn’t feel like you are wearing a plastic bag,” voiced a Vermont ski racer. “This jacket was really easy to move in, especially while touring,” she continued, appreciative of a women’s fit that actually “has room in the shoulders and isn’t restrictive while layering.” Plentiful, spacious pockets also helped earn Editors’ Choice honors, despite the mauve colorway collecting dirt like a welcome mat.

BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM | $625 | XS-XL

♀

SCOTT

EXPLORAIR DRYOSPUN 3L - REMIX PANT

“They’re so comfy that you can forget you’re wearing them, and they still keep you pretty dry through most touring conditions.”—Maggie McGee

If skimo became a pant, it would be the Explorair Dryospun. “So lightweight and stretchy,” said a college student who cruises on the skintrack. “They’re extremely comfortable going uphill and very breathable while still keeping you dry.” Scott’s Dryospun lightweight, waterproof membrane makes these pants supple, soft and weatherproof, she said. While Cordura abrasion-resistant panels do help keep the ankle hems from fraying, our tester recommended these strictly for backcountry use, as they are too chilly and flimsy for the resort. She loved how the fabric breathed but wasn’t sold on the small pockets and vents. She worried the waist cinch could loosen during the day, but admitted that so far, the belt-loop-less design has held up well.

SCOTT-SPORTS.COM | $300 | XS-XL

♀ $

THE LIGHT, PACKABLE GEAR YOU WANT FOR THOSE LONG SPRING EPICS.

With a preference for softshell materials and euro fits, these kits take up minimal space and weight. Still, on windy summits or in unexpected storms they'll keep the elements out.

LA SPORTIVA

2025 EDITORS' CHOICE

LA SPORTIVA

SUPERCOULOIR GTX PRO JACKET

"Light, packable and excellent in adverse weather, the Supercouloir is ideal for alpinism mixed with ski mountaineering." —Ian Halderman

If Marvel runs out of characters, "Supercouloir" could play. He bootpacks faster than a speeding tram, has ice axes permanently fixed to nubs and wears this flashy Sportiva uniform so Mont Blanc climbers and skiers can flag him down. Jokes aside, this Gore-Tex Pro armor made our Teton tester feel like he had skintrack superpowers. "It's a fast and light jacket that's extremely packable considering the features, and highly waterproof without feeling like a trash bag," he raved. He loved the "well-thought-out, minimalistic" zippered pockets, a stashable hood and mountaineering-ready cuffs. The shoulders are reinforced with abrasion-resistant inserts, ensuring backpack friction isn't the Supercouloir's kryptonite. Be warned: The athletic fit doesn't accommodate many layers—or brawnier builds, for that matter.

LASPORTIVAUSA.COM | $699 | XS-XL

RAB EQUIPMENT

KHROMA TOUR PANT

"Just enough to be warm in the predawn hours when the snow is frozen but not so hot when the sun's out." —Tom Hallberg

The Khroma Tour is Rab's spring skiing pant, and our tester said the company nailed it: "These are the perfect sunny day, volcano pants." He judged the slim-tailored, thin softshell offering as mountaineering pants with ski features, like ankle gaiters, cuff zippers and a beacon-specific thigh pocket. Rab's Durable Matrix fabric holds up to quick spurts of snow and wind, and it breathes well, he said, though he still wanted vents. "I'll definitely choose these over my pastel-colored shorts," he joked, "but even skimo athletes and volcano sprinters get hot." Though he never imagined he'd want a pants quiver, he concluded, "These are for hot pant spring, and I'll be stoked the few weeks a year I need them."

RAB.EQUIPMENT/US/ | $165 | 30 REGULAR-38 REGULAR

$

LAGOPED

EVE JACKET

LAGOPED.COM | $600 | S-XL

The bad news is the Eve's fit is strange. "I'm a medium in everything, and the large almost felt too small," our 5'10", 150-pound tester said. He found the jacket short in the waist and not especially roomy for layering underneath. But the good news: The performance-to-weight ratio was top-notch, with supreme stormworthiness at just 580 grams. The recycled heavy-duty, three-layer fabric with a Sympatex Pyster waterproof membrane is "lighter than it should be for how capable it is," he said. Two chest pockets are backpack compatible, and the pit zips are "easier to reach than on most jackets," he found. It's one of the cheapest, relatively light, crossover, do-it-all shells, he concluded. Just try it on first.

$ MONTANE

MEN'S NORDES HOODIE

MONTANE.COM | $325 | S-XXL

"Part hardshell, part softshell, fully awesome!" an impressed Montanan said. The front and high stress areas are made with a mix of recycled 70D Gore-Tex Windstopper and the new ePE membrane (PFC-free, per Gore-Tex). Granite Stretch softshell in the back means the Nordes toes a line between light and storm-ready. "The placement of soft and stretchy breathable sections is intentional and thoughtful," our tester said. While he wished for an internal skin pouch, he loved everything else: The two chest and two hand pockets; a trim, a yet comfortable fit; breathability; and the pit zip location, though another tester found the vents were hard to open.

♀ PATAGONIA

W'S STORMSTRIDE JACKET

PATAGONIA.COM | $499 | XS-XL

Everything you need, nothing you don't was our tester's takeaway of this 17-ounce jacket. "Features are minimal, but I am not asking for more out of my touring shell." Patagonia's stretchy, three-layer, H2No fabric was waterproof, moved with her and didn't ride or bunch up. Plus, fit was on point: "Arm length was appropriate, and it covers the booty!" she exclaimed. The pair of chest pockets are the only sizeable storage, but she found them large enough for skins. Though she wanted longer, easier access pit zips, she had no complaints about breathability or dumping heat. Her advice to anyone considering buying the Stormstride: "Do it!"

♀ RAB EQUIPMENT

KHROMA CONVERGE JACKET

RAB.EQUIPMENT/US/ | $565 | XS-XL

Eco-minded freerider? Meet Rab's new Khroma Converge. The three-layer, 80D recycled Gore-Tex shell sports both a PFC-free DWR and membrane while scoring impressively in Rab's water-column testing. "Keeps you dry and cozy on pow days," affirmed a Tahoe ripper, who rocked the Converge in bounds and out. She also loved the feature set: through-vents along the pecs that were easier to operate than standard pit zips, comfy wrist gaiters and four pack- and harness-friendly external pockets. Neutral colorway and gender-neutral fit were also appreciated. "I love this jacket!" summed up our tester, though she noted it's weight. Ultralight weenies—poke elsewhere.

SPYDER

SANCTION JACKET

SPYDER.COM | $500 | S-XXXL

Spyder's Exo Shield 30K—an elasticized, three-layer plain-weave polyester fabric with a 30K/30K waterproof breathable laminate and PFC-Free DWR—was hands down the highlight of the redesigned Sanction. "It's a great mix of stretch, breathability and waterproofing. Very impressed by the material," said a Teton tourer. The fit ran large, but long sleeves were a boon for our self-proclaimed "monkey-armed" analyst. The Sanction features a cinchable helmet-compatible hood, pit zips, removable powder skirt and a smattering of internal and external pockets. Tester stoke was tempered by low-quality zippers he feared breaking and the inner wrist placement of the pass pocket.

lagoped
patagonia

♀ MARMOT

WOMEN'S REFUGE PRO BIB

MARMOT.COM | $375 | XS-XL

Backcountry specialists on the hunt for a pair of lightweight bibs can take refuge in these Marmot bibs said an East Coast skier who judged them consummate "everyday touring bibs." She found the thin, stretchy, recycled polyester fabric, which sports Marmot's proprietary waterproof and breathable membrane, "comfortable, lightweight, and breathable"—perfect for efficient maneuvering in the backcountry but cold on chilly chairlift-accessed days. "Fit like a dream. They're sleek and slim fitting, without being constricting," our tester reported. She also loved the silhouette that accommodated a midlayer, the chest height of the bibs and leg length and width that comfortably integrated with ski boots. Smooth-gliding zippers, well-designed chest pockets and phone-accommodating thigh pockets solidified the Refuge as her go-to skintrack armor.

♀ MONTANE

WOMEN'S NORDES PANT

MONTANE.COM | $325 | S-XXL

Mullets are back in style, and Montane's Nordes Pant follows the trend with Gore-Tex Windstopper—featuring a forever-chemical-free ePE membrane—in the front and Granite Stretch softshell in the back. "A versatile softshell pant and my first pick on any windy or spring day in the Sierra," said a chef who enjoys cooking up corn. She liked the form-fitting cut and fabric with enough stretch to be comfortable, as well as the 14-inch vents with two-way zippers for easy access and mesh liners. "Snow doesn't get in, and they're in a great location," she proclaimed. Mullet bonafides confirmed, our tester cautioned the Nordes's minimal weatherproofness makes them suitable only for certain parties. "They are not an everyday piece for me. However, they are my go-to on spring days."

ORTOVOX

MONDEVAL PANT

ORTOVOX.COM | $350 | S-XXL

"A true backcountry pant, the Mondeval shines in spring when lines and days get bigger and warmer," claimed a Montana ski tech. He found the fit snug but unrestrictive thanks largely to Ortovox's two-way-stretch merino softshell fabric, which he described as "light, stretchy, breathable, mobile." The wind- and water-resistant material was so well-suited for aerobic activity, in fact, he donned the versatile trousers ice climbing. Features were similarly stoke-worthy. "A thigh pocket, butt pocket and two hand pockets are exactly what's needed in any snow pant," he declared. "All that in a light pant? Huge plus." He loved the alpine-style gaiter, though he wished it were tighter, and feared cuffs, which Ortovox bolstered with Schoeller reinforcements, weren't as tough as crampon clutzes require.

$ OUTDOOR RESEARCH

TRAILBREAKER TOUR PANT

OUTDOORRESEARCH.COM
$249 | S-XXL

A fully featured, surprisingly affordable touring pant, the Trailbreaker pairs a spandex-infused softshell upper for movement with three-layer lower legs for deep-snow defense. The PNW powderhouse added a clip-equipped beacon pocket, spacious cargo pockets, unrestrictive thigh vents and a cuff that enchanted our hardbooting splitboard tester. "You can pull your power strap through a slot in the cuff—it's amazing for deep or wet snow to keep your cuffs down," he gushed. The Trailbreaker also earned high praise for fit—"moved beautifully in the skintrack," he reported—and jogger-like comfort. That said, fabric weight and warmth were his primary concerns, as he overheated often, leading him to recommend the otherwise comfortable softshell for shredders in cooler climes.

EDITORS' CHOICE
elevenate

THE NORTH FACE

♀ ELEVENATE

CIRRUS DOWN JACKET

ELEVENATE.COM | $400 | XS-XL

"The perfect warmth for any mid-winter backcountry day," said a Colorado tester of the Cirrus Down Jacket. Stuffed with responsibly sourced, 750-fill goose down, the Cirrus weighs a few feathers over a half-pound. "It's easy to pack into its chest pocket and slip into any pack," she reported, although she made sure to clarify that it's more of a daily driver than an emergency layer. She dug the gram-shaving zipless handwarmer pockets, as well as the practical hood design. "It has a larger box shape with a stiffer rim to hold it out of your eyes," she applauded. Her biggest gripe: the thin, matte-finished, 100% recycled polyamide shell, which held dirt and wore quickly.

STELLAR

ULTRALIGHT DOWN HOOD 2.0

STELLAREQUIPMENT.COM
$399 | S-XXL

"Marie Kondo must have designed this puffy," our tester said. "No frills, but nothing useless; everything brings joy." Weighing 335 grams and packing 850-fill, hydrophobic down, this hooded puffy went everywhere with our tester: big tours, short bootpacks, work. "I've been rocking a pretty bulky puffy," he said. "This is half the weight and size, but just as warm." A medium in most brands, he tested a large and recommends sizing up. The hood worked well over a helmet, and the cut was a rare combo. Even the ultralight face fabric, which he worried would be fragile, held up to both spring bramble lines and midwinter sandpaper winds.

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT

OREUS VEST

US.MOUNTAIN-EQUIPMENT.COM/ | $300 | S-XXL

Looking to insulate your core but nothing more? Mountain Equipment's Oreus Vest is just the layer to bring along. "Very comfortable, easily packable," said our pleased, purple-haired tester. On the exterior, 100%-recycled, 10D fabric with fluorocarbon-free DWR keeps this 240-gram vest weatherproof and gentle on the environment. Said material also helps to protect the internal Aetherm insulation whose weight-to-warmth ratio and loft optimize this item for the skintrack. "Great for layering," said our tester who found it fit well within a jacket. "Simple and clean," he added, though his one suggestion was changing the color scheme.

THE NORTH FACE

SUMMIT BREITHORN HOODIE

THENORTHFACE.COM
$430 | S-XXL

With The North Face's Breithorn Hoodie, it was love at first embrace, courtesy of a generous serving of 800-fill, hydrophobic ProDown and a slim "performance fit that offers excellent range of motion," per our tester. He reckoned the 15D recycled ripstop Pertex shell "wouldn't hold up long as an outer layer," seeming both fragile and stain-prone, but he wasn't mad given the winning warmth-to-weight ratio. He was also impressed by the feature set, including two handwarmer pockets, a breast pocket, two-internal stash pockets, elasticized cuffs and a secure hood and collar combo.

$ RAB EQUIPMENT

GLACEON PRO JACKET

RAB.EQUIPMENT/US/ | $340 | XS-XXL

Like the Pokemon Glaceon this Rab puffy likes cold climes. In such environs, the wire sewn into the brim kept the hood in place for our tester, while Velcro cuffs stayed the too-long arms. The men's cut had "narrow hips and wide shoulders," she said, and the three pockets (two hand, one chest) were spacious. A 20D Pertex Quantum Pro outer stuffed with 700-fill hydrophobic down was sturdy and warm. "I haven't had any wear and tear, despite some heavy use," she said. It was less packable than ultralight options, but, she added, "While those lack features and snag when you look at them wrong, this one is durable enough to double as a daily town jacket."

EDITORS' CHOICE
STELLAR
MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT
Rab

Chelsea is wearing the Echo Hoodie, Echo Tank (inset), Cirque Lite Pants, and Helium Gaiters.
Max is wearing the Astroman Air Sun Hoodie, Cirque Lite Pants, and Helium Gaiters.

OR OUTDOOR RESEARCH

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Location: Mt. Shuksan, Washington
Photographer: Colton Jacobs

EDITORS' CHOICE
2025

♀ $

HELLY HANSEN

W VERSALITE HYBRID FLEECE

HELLYHANSEN.COM | $120 | XS-XL

"My favorite midlayer ever," gushed a Vermonter of Helly Hansen's Versalite Hybrid Fleece. Made primarily from a polyester blend with a touch of elastane for stretch, the front torso sports a 100% polyamide panel for light weatherproofing. Inside, the 100% polyester liner earned this piece a permanent spot in our tester's touring kit. "Super cozy fleece, thick but not overly warm," she reported. As a shorter skier, she liked the boxier fit and semi-high waist, which "looks as good with jeans as it did with my bibs," she said. Additional award-earning elements: enough storage for the holy trinity of touring (snacks, phone and keys) and a practical hoodless design.

ORTOVOX

SWISSWOOL PIZ BOÉ JACKET

ORTOVOX.COM | $300 | S-XXL

Ortovox's alpine alchemists, known for favoring merino, struck gold with the Piz Boé Jacket. Four-way-stretch merino softshell inserts provide breathability and range of motion along the pits and back. "It moves with you," affirmed a Teton tester. Beneath the wind- and water-resistant Pertex Quantum shell, a merino-blend lining adds warmth. "Cuts wind well," reported our impressed tester. He loved the minimalistic dual chest pockets and a slim fit that welcomes puffies and shells. All told, he called it a "versatile piece great for all types of skiing. Better for mild to cold days." Nonetheless, he wished Ortovox scrapped an elastic hemline that made the jacket ride up.

♀

ARC'TERYX

ATOM HOODY

ARCTERYX.COM | $300 | XXS-XXL

"Great for all manner of adventures!" praised our tester who wore this midlayer up volcanos and out to dinner. Coreloft Compact, Arc'teryx's synthetic, breathable and low-profile insulation, keeps this jacket sveldt yet warm. Plus, fleece side panels helped our tester dump heat when needed. Additional features include a helmet-compatible hood, two hip pockets and an internal chest pocket, and stretch-knit cuffs, which our tester found easy to layer over. "Great for tours where you need a midlayer with a little weather proofness and warmth." She added, "The fit tows the line perfectly to layer under and over."

$

FJÄLLRÄVEN

ABISKO GRID FLEECE HOODIE

FJALLRAVEN.COM | $155 | XXS-XXL

Car to the bar is a cliché used for beacons, but it also applies to the Abisko Hoodie. "A piece that's versatile, one that can go from the skintrack to the grocery store," a Vermonter said. The grid fleece is comfy "like your favorite sweatshirt," she reported, and the layout is basic, with two hand pockets and one on the chest. She wore it more as a casual piece, but a Colorado man reached for it all spring, regardless of the activity. He liked the stretchy fabric and how it fit in his clothing system. "Consistent comfort with plenty of mobility and elasticity," he said. "No loose or excess material liable to bunch up beneath other layers."

♀

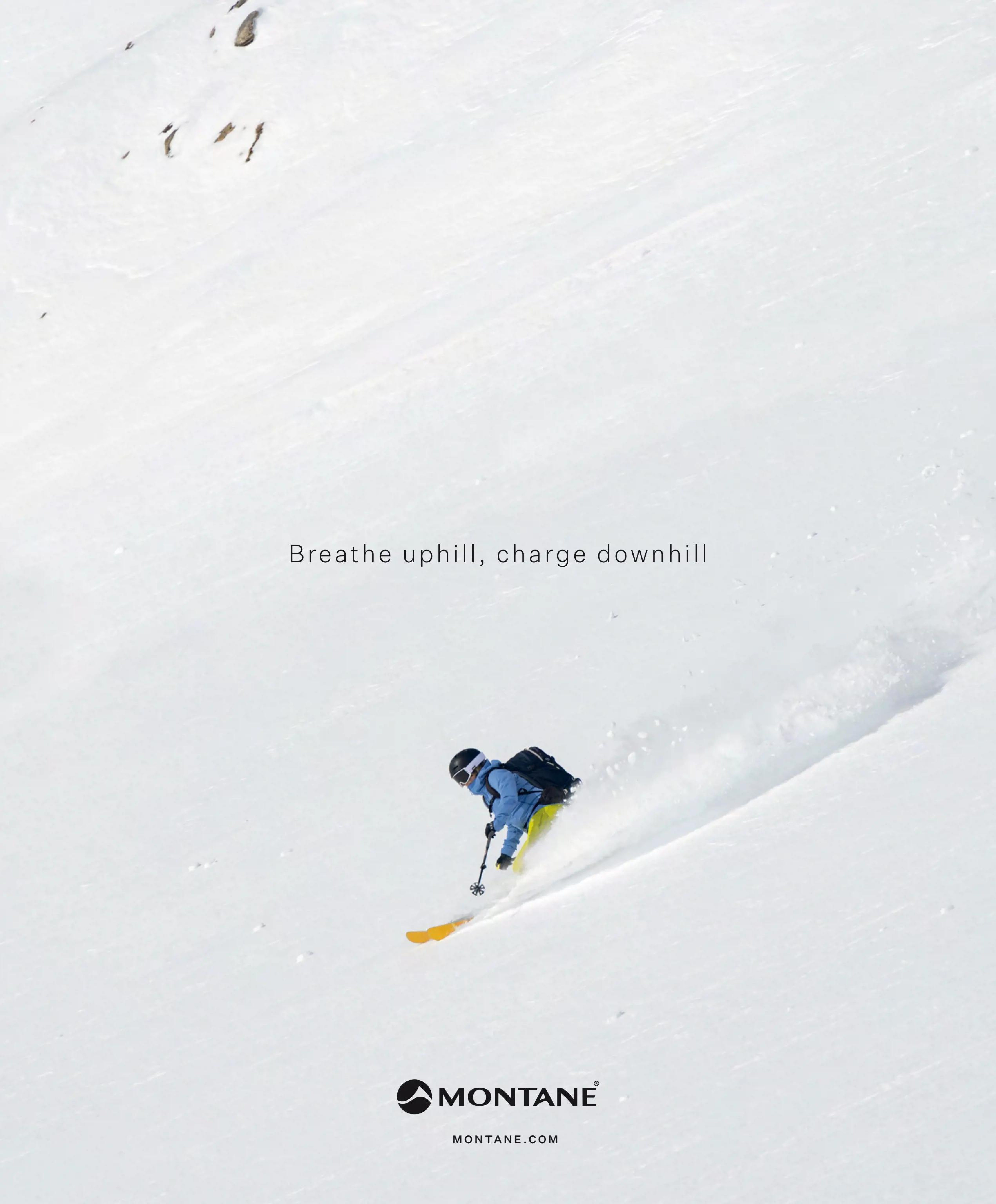
OUTDOOR RESEARCH

WOMEN'S DEVIATOR FLEECE HALF ZIP

OUTDOORRESEARCH.COM
$229 | XS-XXL

A new addition to Outdoor Research's tester-beloved Deviator line, this cutilitarian (cute meets utilitarian) fleece offers what one tester called "all-day comfort" on and off the skintrack. The body-mapped midlayer sports a soft, waffle-style polyester fleece, stretchier spandex-infused panels along and under the arms and a generous front zip for venting and easy entry and exit. Plus, the Deviator scored perfectly for fit. "This midlayer is designed like a base layer. It stacks beautifully, moves with you and tapers in all the right places. It fits real bodies," emphasized our tester. She did note the petite pocket is better suited for cards than smartphones.

EDITORS' CHOICE
2025



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MONS ROYALE

CASCADE MERINO FLEX

US.MONSROYALE.COM | $130 TOP
$130 BOTTOM | XS-XL

“Perfect anti-stink touring layers,” a college professor said of the Cascade. Mons Royale’s four-way-stretch fabric is a merino-heavy blend that includes nylon and elastane, and with flat seams, the Cascade offers full-day comfort. A Tahoe bootfitter noted that he liked the cut and called the fabric “the best merino in the biz.” Two female testers called out the large, flat waistband as comfortable and effective. “No issues with riding up or bunching anywhere,” the professor said. Mons’s fanciful patterns garnered appreciation from all testers, though muted, safe-for-work options are available, too. After a spring spent in the Cascades, the bootfitter said, “I’m a Mons fanboy.”

$ BACKCOUNTRY.COM

CEDARS RWS MERINO LT-WT

BACKCOUNTRY.COM
$89 TOP | $89 BOTTOM | S-XXL

A Teton ski guide and his retired female counterpart tested these Backcountry.com baselayers during spring corn harvests. “Nice kit for warm days,” the current guide claimed, a nod to Backcountry.com’s lightweight, moisture-wicking wool-and-nylon blend. “The wicking was super impressive,” the gal added. “My go-to skinning layers this spring.” Our male tester dug the bottom’s body-hugging, performance silhouette, reporting, “The legs fit snug and helped keep the cuffs rolled up and out of my boots.” He was happy the Cedar ½ Zip Scuba Top was equipped with a built-in balaclava but found the lycra-wrapped hood a tad claustrophobic for comfortable continuous deployment.

ICEBREAKER

MERINO 200 OASIS

ICEBREAKER.COM | $105 TOP
$105 BOTTOM | XS-XL

It’s no surprise these 100% merino baselayers are “great for comfort and regulating temperature,” according to an impressed Vermonter. He reported no unwanted friction between body and baselayer after a multi-day hut trip and dug the silhouette, too. “Consistent comfort from waist to wrist with plenty of mobility and elasticity,” he penned. “Roomy shoulders and chest—not oversized, but comfortable,” agreed our technical editor, who’d happily don the crew on “just about any day of backcountry skiing.” While gents had no complaints, a Vermonter who tested the women’s leggings pined for a higher, more comfortable waist band and more shape longevity.

♀ KARI TRAA

ROSE LIGHT

KARITRAA.COM | $120 TOP
$110 BOTTOM | XS-XL

Festooned in floral and crafted from pure merino wool, the Rose Light Half Zip and corresponding High Waist Pants are “cozy, comfortable and stylish,” according to a Montana tester. The plush, 220 grams-per-square-meter wool fabric was soft, warm and breathable—perfect for cold days, she reported. If you do work up a sweat, not to worry. “Even soaked, this shirt is going to provide warmth,” she opined. She loved the substantial waist band, which kept the pants in place on long backcountry days. And while she appreciated the extra venting of the central zip, the stylishly teeny zipper pull wasn’t practical while wearing gloves.

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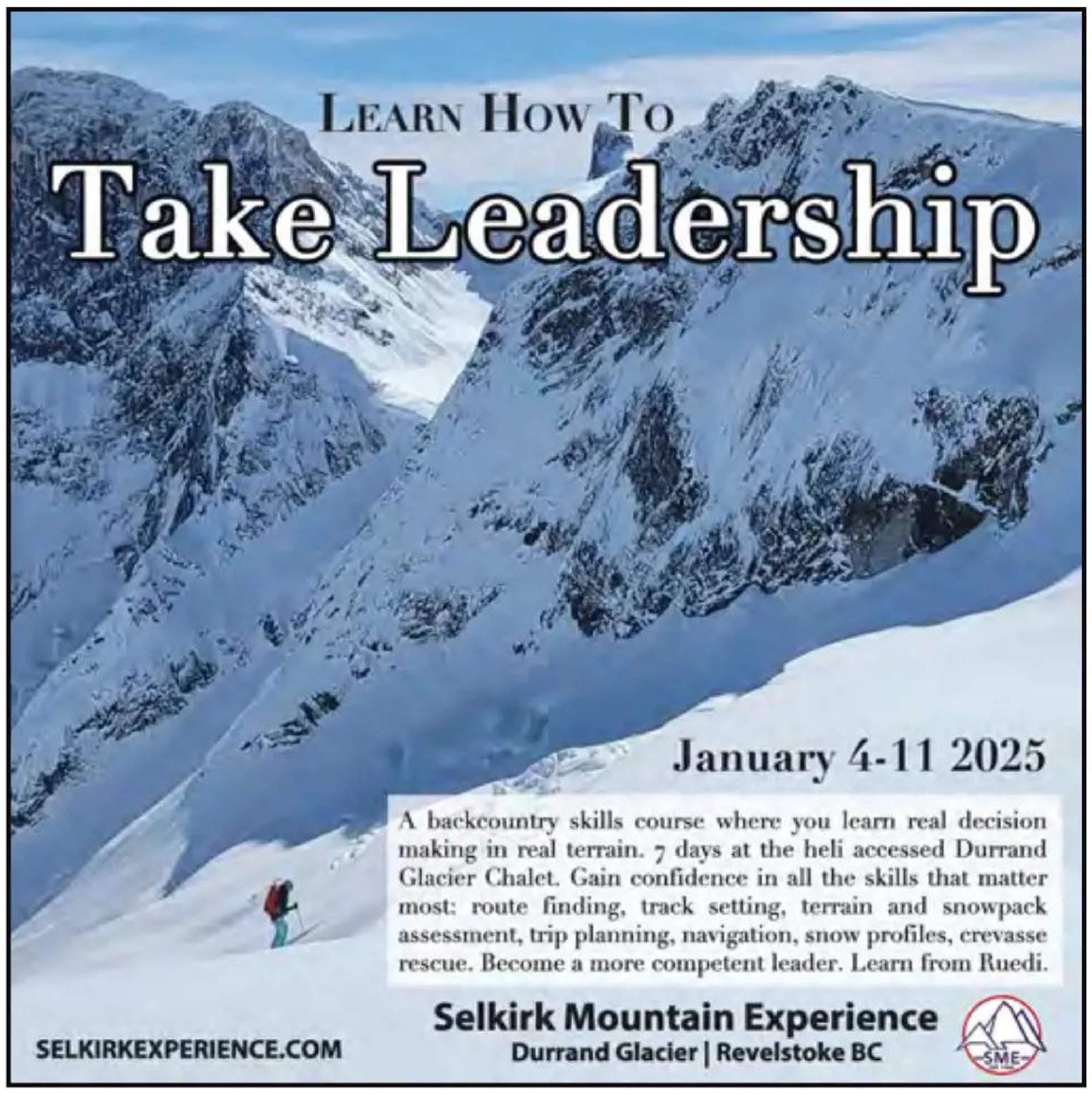
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▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Alpine to the Max	Boulder	alpinetothemax.com	info@alpinetothemax.com
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▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Avalanche Savvy	Steamboat Springs	avalanchesavvy.com	info@avalanchesavvy.com
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	Montana			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	American Avalanche Institute	Bozeman	americanavalancheinstitute.com	service@americanavalancheinstitute.com
▲1 ▲2	Beartooth Mountain Guides Inc.	Cooke City, Red Lodge	beartoothguides.com	info@beartoothguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Big Sky Backcountry Guides	Big Sky, Bozeman	bigskybackcountry.com	info@bigskybackcountry.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	The Mountain Guides	Whitefish	themountainguides.com	info@themountainguides.com
	Nevada			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Blackbird Mountain Guides	Incline Village	blackbirdguides.com	info@blackbirdguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	SWS Mountain Guides	Las Vegas	swsmountainguides.com	info@swsmountainguides.com
	New Hampshire			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Acadia Mountain Guides	Gorham	acadiamountainguides.com	climb@acadiamountainguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	American Avalanche Institute	Jackson	americanavalancheinstitute.com	service@americanavalancheinstitute.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Blue Ridge Mountain Guides	North Conway	blueridgemtnguides.com	info@blueridgemtnguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Northeast Mountaineering	Glen	nemountaineering.com	info@nemountaineering.com
	New Mexico			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Beverly Mountain Guides	Taos	beverlymountainguides.com	marc@beverlymountainguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	Silverton Avalanche School	Taos	avyschool.org	info@avyschool.org
	Oregon			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Kaf Adventures	Mount Hood	kafadventures.com	register@kafadventures.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Oregon Ski Guides	Bend	oregonskiguides.com	info@timberlinemtguides.com
	Utah			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	American Avalanche Institute	Salt Lake City	americanavalancheinstitute.com	service@americanavalancheinstitute.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Backcountry Pros	Salt Lake City	thebackcountrypros.com	info@thebackcountrypros.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Inspired Summit Adventures	Park City	inspiredsummit.com	info@inspiredsummit.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Red River Adventures	Salt Lake City	redriveradventures.com	carl@redriveradventures.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	The Mountain Guides	Salt Lake City	themountainguides.com	info@themountainguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Weber State University Outdoor Programs	Ogden	weber.edu	hayleyprine@weber.edu
	Washington			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Alpine Ascents International	Bellingham, Mount Baker, Mount Rainier, Seattle, Snoqualmie Pass	alpineascents.com	climb@alpineascents.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	American Avalanche Institute	Bellingham	americanavalancheinstitute.com	service@americanavalancheinstitute.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Blackbird Mountain Guides	Mount Baker, Snoqualmie Pass	blackbirdguides.com	info@blackbirdguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Cascade Mountain Ascents	Bellingham	cascademountainascents.com	operations@cascademountainascents.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Guided Exposure	Mount Baker, Snoqualmie Pass	guidedexposure.com	info@guidedexposure.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Kaf Adventures	Mount Baker, Snoqualmie Pass	kafadventures.com	register@kafadventures.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	North Cascades Mountain Guides	Methow Valley	ncmountainguides.com	info@ncmountainguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Pro Guiding Service	Enumclaw, Snoqualmie Pass	proguiding.com	info@proguiding.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	The Mountain Bureau	Mount Baker, Snoqualmie Pass	mountainbureau.com	contact@mountainbureau.com
	Wyoming			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+ ☆1 ☆2	American Avalanche Institute	Jackson	americanavalancheinstitute.com	service@americanavalancheinstitute.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	The Mountain Guides	Jackson	themountainguides.com	info@themountainguides.com
	International			
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Acadia Mountain Guides	Quebec, Canada	acadiamountainguides.com	climb@acadiamountainguides.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Aprendica Avalanche Safety	Argentina, Chile, Ecuador	aprendica.com	snow@aprendica.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Guided Exposure	Chile, Japan	guidedexposure.com	info@guidedexposure.com
▲1 ▲2 ▲+	Kootenay Backcountry Guides	British Columbia, Canada	kootenaybackcountryguides.com	judson@kootenaybackcountryguides.com

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INDEX

EC 2025 Editors' Choice　24 2024 Editors' Choice　♀ Women's Choice　$ Bang for Your Buck

SKIS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	TOURING CATEGORY	DIMENSIONS (Tip/Waist/Tail)	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
	4FRNT Hoji	$809	Free Touring	128/112/120	3,980 (184)	46
♀	**Armada** Locator 104	$1,025	Sport Touring	131/104/122	2,900 (178)	56
	Armada Locator 112	$1,100	Free Touring	136/112/128	3,150 (180)	48
♀	**Armada** Locator 96	$975	Sport Touring	127/96/117	2,700 (178)	60
♀	**Atomic** Backland 101 W	$900	Sport Touring	127/101/117.5	2,520 (164)	56
EC	**Atomic** Backland 109	$975	Sport Touring	135/109.5/124	3,080 (184)	36
♀	**Atomic** Backland 86 UL	$900	Speed Touring	120/85.5/108	1,940 (172)	66
♀	**Atomic** Bent 110	$900	Free Touring	133/110/124	3,500 (180)	48
EC ♀	**Black Diamond Equipment** Helio Carbon 104	$950	Sport Touring	131/104/118	2,760 (172)	37
24 ♀	**Black Diamond Equipment** Helio Carbon 95	$880	Sport Touring	124/95/113	2,800 (176)	62
♀	**Black Diamond Equipment** Impulse 104 TI	$850	Free Touring	136/104/123	3,760 (179)	52
EC ♀	**Black Diamond Equipment** Impulse 98 TI	$800	Free Touring	132/98/119	3,580 (182)	33
EC	**Blackcrows** Draco Freebird	$1,150	Free Touring	136/110/125	3,650 (175)	32
♀	**Blackcrows** Mentis Freebird	$1,000	Speed Touring	110/80/100	2,000 (171)	66
	Blizzard Zero G 105	$899	Sport Touring	133/105/119	3,080 (180)	56
♀	**Blizzard** Zero G 95	$799	Sport Touring	127/95/111	2,520 (178)	64
♀	**Blizzard** Zero G LT80	$799	Speed Touring	108/80/94	2,000 (171)	68
	Cardiff Crane	$850	Free Touring	123/104/120	3,178 (172)	54
	Cardiff Goat Pro Carbon	$1,149	Free Touring	129/108/121	3,156 (180)	50
♀	**DPS** Carbon Pagoda Tour CFL 105	$1,695	Free Touring	134/105/118	3,100 (179)	52
EC ♀	**DPS** Carbon Pagoda Tour CFL 112	$1,695	Sport Touring	140/112/125	3,020 (178)	36
♀	**Dynafit** DNA Ski	$950	Speed Touring	98/64/79	1,380 (162)	68
	Dynafit Ridge Skis 95	$800	Sport Touring	129/95/116	2,660 (176)	62
	Dynafit Tigard 107 Ski	$850	Free Touring	133/107/121	3,220 (183)	52
	Dynastar M-Tour 100	$800	Sport Touring	134/100/124	2,700 (178)	58
	Dynastar M-Tour 108	$900	Free Touring	135/107/125	3,000 (179)	50
♀	**Faction** La Machine 2 Mini	$899	Sport Touring	124/99/116	2,780 (177)	58
EC 24	**Fischer** Transalp 105 CTI	$950	Sport Touring	139/105/124	3,060 (178)	37
	Fischer Transalp 92 Pro CTI	$900	Sport Touring	123/92/109	1,380 (169)	64
	Head Crux 105 Pro	$950	Sport Touring	133/105/122	2,880 (184)	56
	Head Crux 99 Pro	$900	Sport Touring	132/99/117	2,770 (184)	60
	Head Crux 93 Pro	$850	Sport Touring	130/93/113	2,560 (177)	64
EC ♀	**Head** Crux 87 Pro	$800	Speed Touring	126/87/108	2,440 (177)	44
	J Skis The Slacker	$799	Free Touring	136/110/128	3,820 (182)	48
♀	**Line** Vision 104	$800	Free Touring	132/104/123	3,620 (185)	52
$	**Line** Vision 96	$750	Free Touring	131/96/120	3,360 (184)	54
	Nordica Unleashed 108	$800	Free Touring	140.5/108/129.5	4,140 (180)	48
EC	**Rossignol** Escaper 105 Nano	$800	Sport Touring	135/105/125	2,800 (179)	37
$ ♀	**Rossignol** Escaper 88 Nano	$700	Speed Touring	121/88/111	2,700 (176)	66
$ 24	**Rossignol** Escaper 97 Nano	$750	Sport Touring	126/97/116	2,700 (177)	60
EC $ ♀ 24	**Salomon** MTN 86 Carbon	$700	Speed Touring	120/86/106	2,300 (172)	44
♀	**Salomon** MTN 96 Carbon	$800	Sport Touring	129/96/115	2,780 (174)	60
EC ♀ 24	**Salomon** QST Echo	$800	Free Touring	139/106/126	3,520 (181)	32
	Salomon QST X	$800	Free Touring	140/116/127	3,800 (184)	46
$	**Scott** Explorair 92 LT	$750	Sport Touring	124/92/113	2,300 (172)	64
EC	**Stereo Skis** Lynx MK 5	$1,050	Free Touring	130/100/118	3,220 (186)	33
EC ♀ 24	**Voilé** Charger Ace	$995	Sport Touring	140/106/124	3,182 (178)	36
EC $ ♀ 24	**Voilé** Endeavor	$750	Speed Touring	117/84/102	2,951 (178)	44
$	**Voilé** SR61	$750	Speed Touring	93/63/79	1,594 (161)	68
♀	**Voilé** Vector Ace	$995	Sport Touring	130/96/114	2,680 (177)	62
EC $ ♀	**Völkl** Blaze 104	$750	Free Touring	143/104/128	3,600 (179)	32
$ 24	**Völkl** Blaze 114	$750	Free Touring	154/114/136	3,890 (184)	46
$ ♀	**Völkl** Blaze 94	$700	Free Touring	133/94/118	3,380 (179)	54
$	**Völkl** Rise Beyond 96	$750	Sport Touring	138/96/119	2,524 (170)	62
$	**Weston** Grizzly	$699	Free Touring	144/120/134	4,200 (186)	46
	WNDR Alpine Nocturne 88	$899	Speed Touring	117/88/108	3,100 (178)	66
EC ♀	**WNDR Alpine** Vital 98	$899	Free Touring	126/98/117	3,550 (183)	33
	Zag Slap 104 Lite	$899	Free Touring	136/104/125.2	3,240 (176)	54

SKI BINDINGS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	TOURING CATEGORY	RELEASE VALUE	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
	22 Designs Lynx	$560	Tele	N/A	1,044	88
EC	**ATK** Freeraider 15 Evo	$780	Speed Touring	7-15 RV	790	81
	Atomic Shift^2 13 MN	$800	Free Touring	6-13 DIN	1,840	82
EC	**Cast** Freetour 2.0 Pivot 18	$780	Free Touring	8-18 DIN	2,680 (ski)/2,000 (tour)	81
EC $	**Dynafit** Ridge Binding	$600	Sport Touring	4-12 RV	820	81
$	**Dynafit** Seven Summits Binding	$350	Speed Touring	4-10 RV	640	84
	Fritschi Tecton 13	$680	Free Touring	5-13 DIN	1,200	82
	Inwild Meidjo 3 SR	$599	Tele	1-4 RV	960	88
24	**Marker** Cruise 12	$650	Sport Touring	6-12 RV	950	84
	Plum Karibou 14 Stopper	$739	Sport Touring	7-14 RV	1,100	82
24	**Salomon** MTN Summit 12 BR	$600	Sport Touring	6-12 RV	830	84
EC $	**Tyrolia** Almonte 12 PT	$575	Speed Touring	5, 8, 12 RV	650	81
24 $	**Voilé** TTS Transit	$490	Tele	N/A	1,100	88

*All products are listed alphabetically by type

SKI BOOTS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	TOURING CATEGORY	FLEX	LAST (mm)	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
EC ♀	**Atomic** Backland XTD Carbon 115 W	$1,100	Sport Touring	115	100	2,580	41
㉔	**Atomic** Backland XTD Carbon 120	$1,100	Sport Touring	120	100	2,760	74
㉔	**Atomic** Hawx Prime XTD 130 Boa GW	$1,150	Free Touring	130	100	4,034	70
♀	**Atomic** Hawx Ultra XTD 115 Boa W GW	$1,050	Free Touring	115	98	3,240	70
EC	**Dalbello** Cabrio MV Free 120 IF	$700	Free Touring	120	101	3,960	40
$ ♀	**Dalbello** Cabrio MV Free 95 WIF	$650	Free Touring	95	101	3,580	74
	Dalbello Quantum Free Pro	$900	Sport Touring	130	100	2,600	74
㉔ ♀	**Dalbello** Quantum Free W	$800	Sport Touring	105	100	2,400	76
	Dynafit Mezzalama Boot	$800	Speed Touring	N/A	97	1,750	78
EC	**Dynafit** Ridge Pro Boot	$900	Speed Touring	120	101	2,500	45
	Dynafit Tigard 110	$800	Free Touring	110	101	3,100	72
	Fischer RC4 Pro DYN	$1,150	Free Touring	130	100	4,920	70
EC	**Head** Crux Pro	$950	Speed Touring	130	99	2,500	45
EC	**La Sportiva** Kilo	$899	Speed Touring	110	100.5	2,000	45
EC	**Lange** XT3 Tour Light 130 MV	$1,000	Free Touring	130	99	2,900	40
	Roxa R3 130 TI I.R.	$950	Free Touring	130	99	3,160	72
EC ♀	**Salomon** Shift Alpha Boa 115 W	$850	Free Touring	115	98	3,340	40
♀	**Salomon** Shift Alpha Boa 130	$950	Free Touring	130	98	3,500	70
EC	**Scarpa** 4-Quattro Pro	$949	Sport Touring	130+	100	3,110	41
$	**Scarpa** Alien	$749	Speed Touring	95	99	1,740	78
㉔	**Scarpa** F1 XT	$800	Speed Touring	95	100	2,290	78
EC	**Scarpa** TX Pro	$849	Tele	N/A	102	3,090	87
EC ♀	**Scarpa** TX Pro WMN	$849	Tele	N/A	102	2,720	87
$	**Scott** Cosmos Re-source	$730	Sport Touring	110	103.5	2,760	74
EC	**Tecnica** Zero G Tour Pro	$899	Sport Touring	130	99	2,578	41
♀	**Tecnica** Zero G Tour Pro W	$899	Sport Touring	125	99	2,256	76

SPLITBOARDS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
♀	**Burton** Unisex Fish 3D Split	$1,000	N/A	105
EC	**Cardiff Snowcraft** Bonsai Enduro Split	$950	3,379 (158)	96
EC	**Cardiff Snowcraft** Swell Enduro Split	$950	3,284g (160)	96
	Chimera Backcountry Snowboards Shop Rat (Guide Series)	$975	2,805	104
EC	**Chimera Backcountry Snowboards** The Hermit 165	$949	3,145 (165)	97
EC	**Jones Snowboards** Storm Chaser Split	$950	3,100	97
	Korua Shapes Dart Split	$849	3,300 (156)	99
㉔	**Korua Shapes** Escalator Split Plus	$1,199	2,650 (162)	105
	Never Summer Nokhu Split	$1,120	3,356 (159)	99
♀	**Pallas Snowboards** Epiphany (Alpine Series)	$999	2,815 (151)	104
$	**Rossignol** Escaper Split	$550	3,650 (157)	98
	Rossignol XV Split	$850	3,450 (159)	99
EC	**Stranda** Biru Backcountry	$890	3,160 (154)	97
	Stranda Descender Fjäderlätt	$1,490	2,790 (161)	105
	Stranda Shorty Backcountry	$990	3,250 (159)	102
	Telos Snowboards Lemurian Carbon Splitboard	$1,330	2,600	105
	Venture Euphoria	$999	3,510 (156)	98
	Venture Storm	$999	3,420 (157)	99
♀	**Voilé** Skyline	$950	3,181 (158)	102
$ ♀	**Voilé** Spartan	$650	3,292 (158)	100
	Weston Japow Split	$949	3,270 (159)	100
$	**Weston** Range Split	$749	3,200 (158)	102
$ ♀	**Weston** Rise Split	$749	2,850 (152)	102
EC ♀ ㉔	**WNDR Alpine** BelleTour	$999	3,200 (156)	96

SPLITBOARD BOOTS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
	Burton Men's Photon Step On Boot	$480	N/A	108
$	**Deeluxe** Spark XV	$409	2,560	108
EC	**Key Equipment** Disruptive	$699	2,510	107
EC	**ThirtyTwo** Jones MTB Boa	$700	N/A	107
♀	**ThirtyTwo** TM-2 Double Boa Women's	$440	N/A	108
	ThirtyTwo TM-2 Jones	$440	N/A	108

SPLITBOARD BINDINGS

	PRODUCT	MSRP	WEIGHT/PAIR (Grams)	PAGE NUMBER
	Burton Step On Split Binding	$520	N/A	112
EC	**Plum** Sok	$699	1,520	111
	Ride A-BC	$640	N/A	112
	Spark R&D Arc ST	$459	1,256	112
EC	**Spark** R&D Surge ST	$489	1,378	111
$	**Voilé** Light Speed	$375	1,500	112

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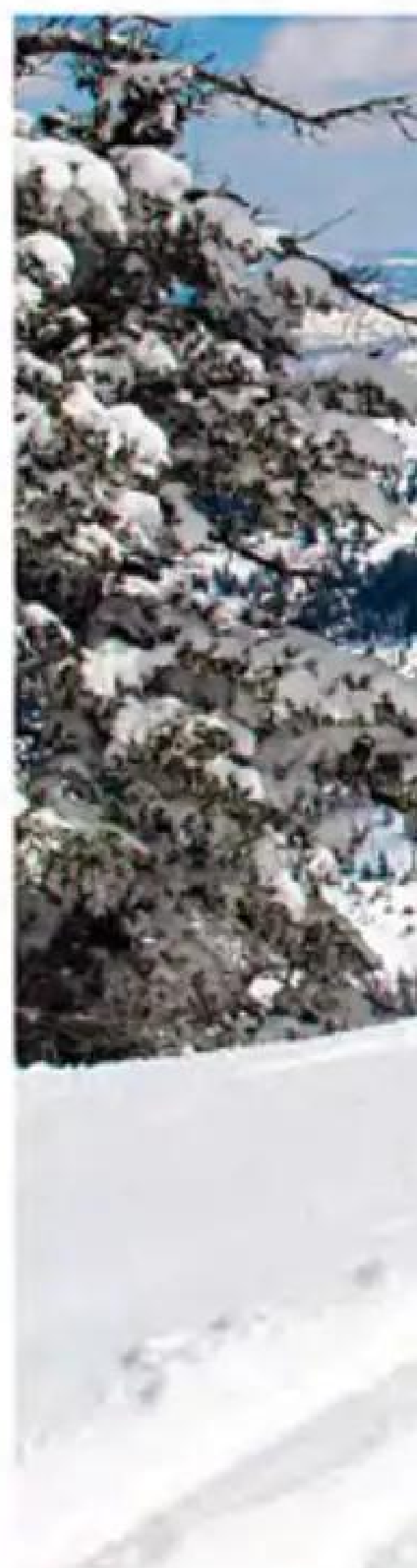

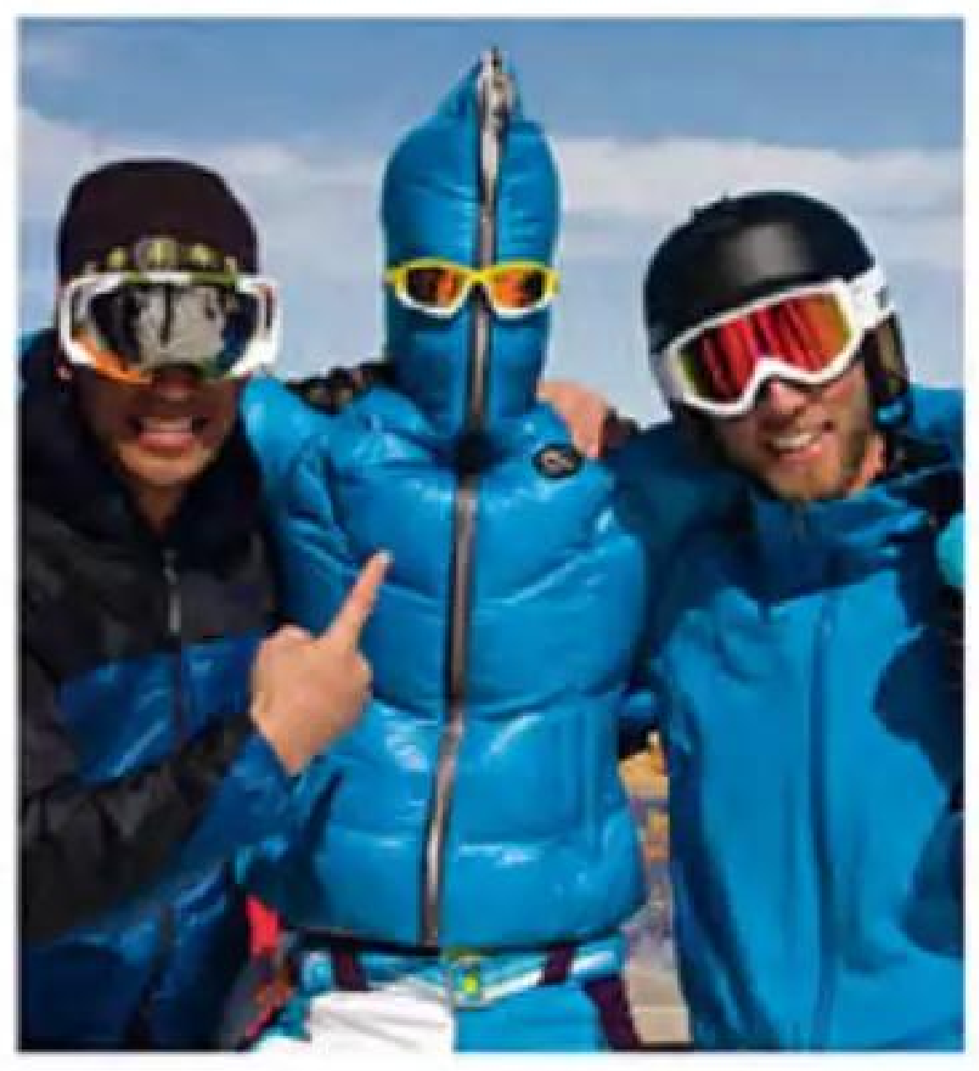

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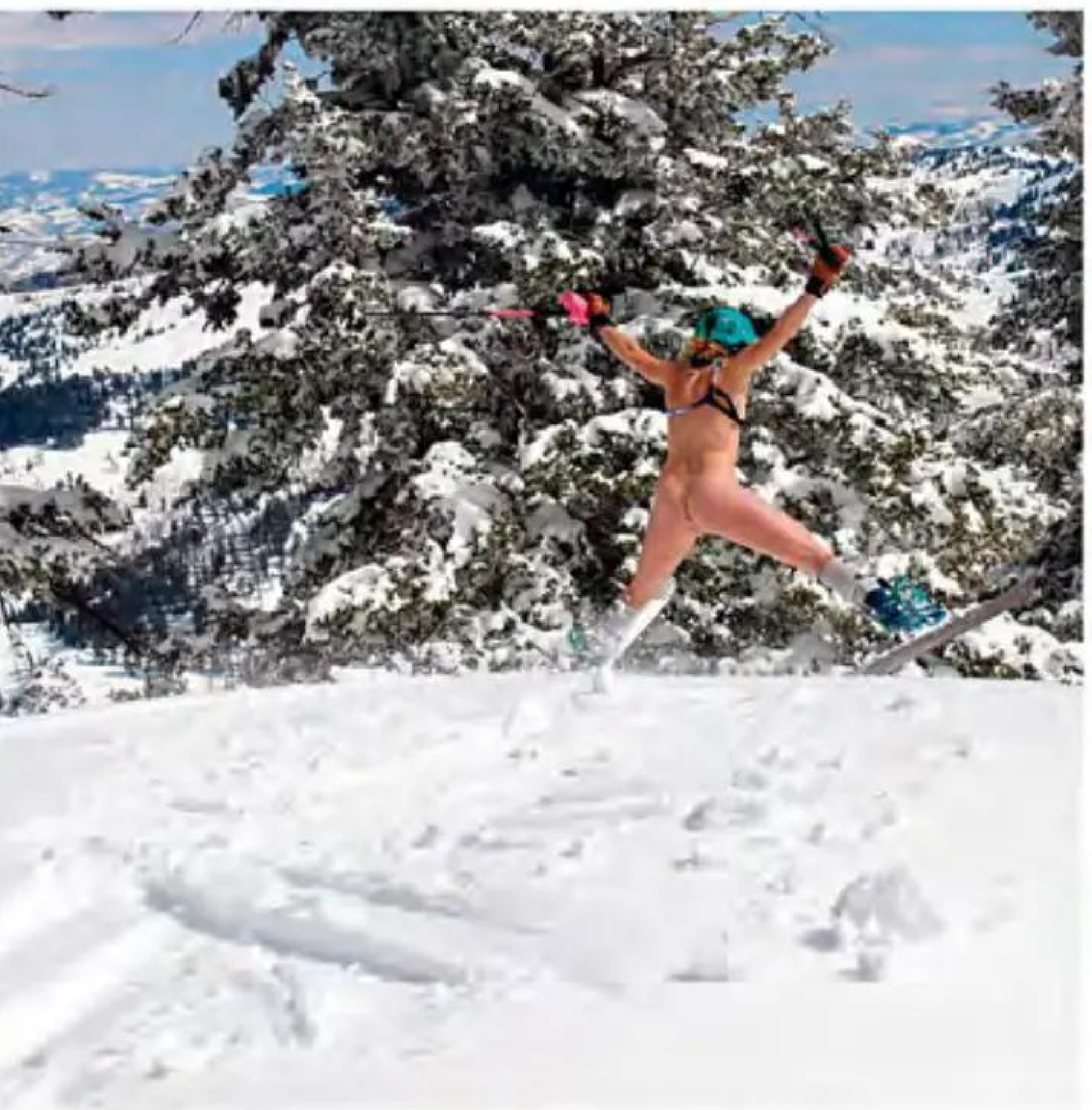

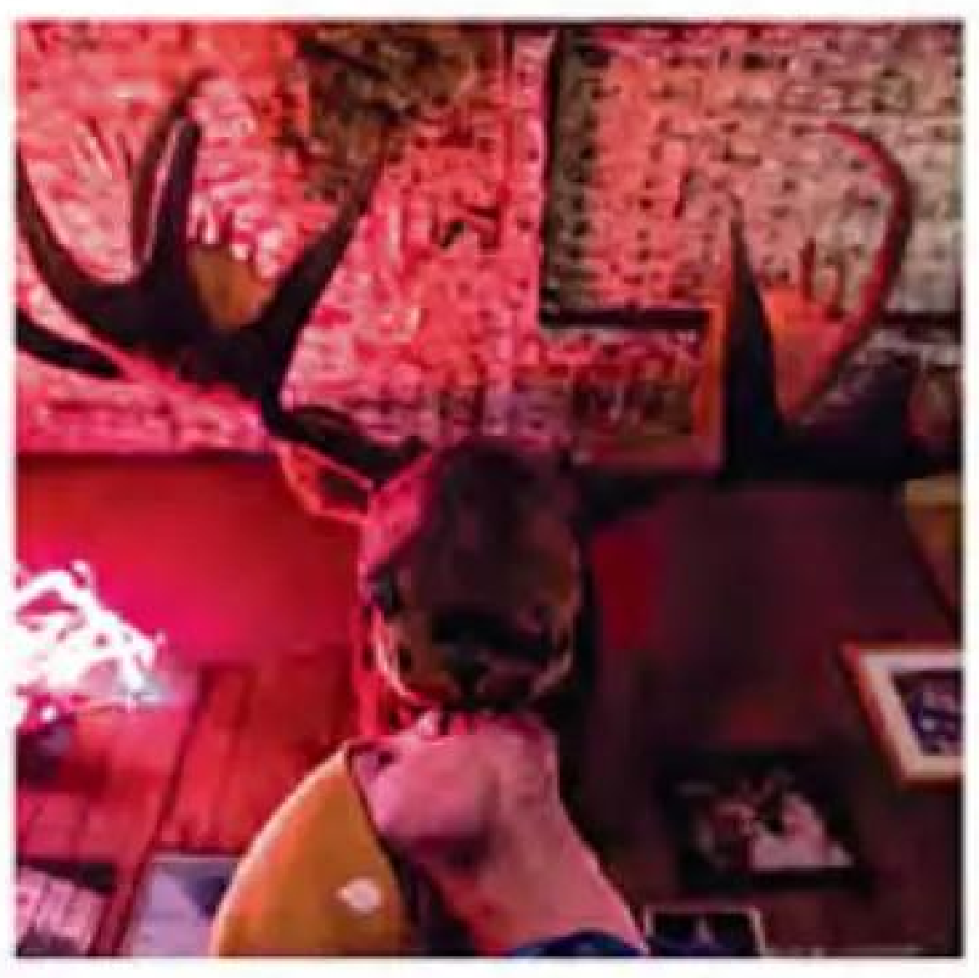

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